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ISSUE NO 195

THE LITTLEBIG ISSUE

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Every Sony 3D title tried and tested

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

LittleBIG Planet 2

The Sack is back in one of the most exciting sequels of all time!

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New PlayStation games revealed

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IN STORES AUGUST 20, 2010

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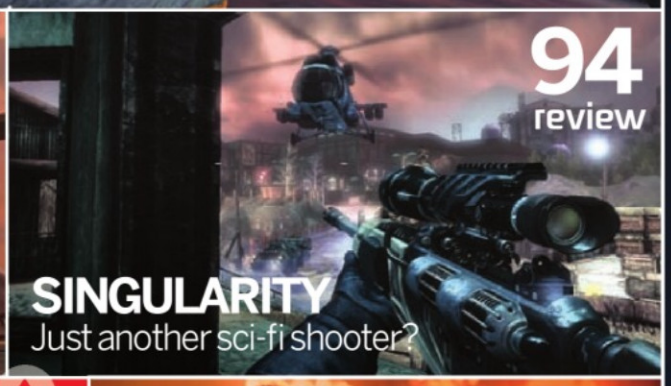

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PlayStation 3 PS2 PSP 演劇端末

Welcome PLAY

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

The LittleBig issue

Play, Create, Share. That is the simple philosophy behind *LittleBigPlanet*, a game that despite having numerous detractors when it was first announced has become one of the PlayStation 3's most successful titles. Sackboy is now just as synonymous with Sony as Nathan Drake or Kratos. Not the overnight success that so many publishers crave, *LittleBigPlanet* has been slowly gathering steam ever since its release back in November 2008. Its community seems to mirror the game itself, always growing and expanding. Giving gamers the power to literally make the game was a risky move and a difficult one but it certainly paid off, now having heard first hand what (the now Sony-owned) Media Molecule is aiming to achieve with the sequel, our tiny stitched heads are still spinning. You can get yourself all dizzy by turning to page 42 and finding out all the details from our exclusive studio visit.

> Sackboy is now just as synonymous with Sony as Nathan Drake or Kratos

While *LittleBigPlanet 2* is certainly one of the biggest games heading to the PS3 this year that doesn't mean we're ignoring any of the others. In fact, we've been hard at work hoovering up new information on every promising title arriving on the PlayStation over the next 12 months and you can find out about them all in our huge preview feature that has insider information from developers behind the likes of *Call Of Duty: Black Ops*, *Final Fantasy XIV* and *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* as well as games you'll be hearing a lot more about in the months ahead, such as the frenetic *Bulletstorm* and Bethesda's *Rage*.

Those of you with a healthy appetite for exclusives can also read all about the sequel to the epic *Dragon Age* as we travel to BioWare to uncover the developer's plans to make the most addictive RPG experience yet. So enjoy as we create and share **Play** magazine with you.

K. Hennessey Editor

contributors

Tom Hopkins
Tom met a rather unusual fellow named Oscar on a train. Dressed in a suit, Oscar appeared normal and respectable to start with, but he kicked off his shoes as he sat down to reveal bare feet. He then did a lot of muttering, smirking and fart noises and asked Tom out for a drink, immediately admitting that this was a stupid idea.

Simon Miller
SuperMiller was given a free can of tuna this month as reward for an act of bravery. He saw a chav attack a newsagent after being refused cigarettes and intervened. SuperMiller is HUGE so the chav legged it. As reward the newsagent gave SuperMiller free tuna. Tuna is to SuperMiller what spinach is to Popeye. Or what bananas are to Bananaman.

Gavin Mackenzie
Gav saw Manowar for a second time this month. It was so loud it made the ground shake. Incredible stuff. Seeing his heroes involved spending a week camping in Slovenia, a beautiful, mountainous country where it was very hot, but the festival organisers had kindly provided a crystal-clear, ice-cold river in which to stay cool. Hvala!

the PLAY promise

Play solemnly swears (raises right hand) to bring you the best PlayStation magazine that is humanly possible.

We will always bring you the most in-depth, impartial, honest reviews and will never bow down to PR or advertising pressure. We have some of the most experienced reviewers in the industry and we're not afraid to use them. And we take our own screenshots so you can see what the game looks like *when you play it*. We will be the first to break the biggest stories, the first to cover the biggest games and in the most detailed way. We will only ever bang on about the very best PlayStation games, the ones that we would pay our own cash for. We aren't afraid of expressing an opinion, especially when it's for your benefit. So don't expect our previews to simply regurgitate a load of internet or press release tosh – we'll be telling you whether a game is looking good or not, regardless of the stage of the code.

We want to fuel your passion for gaming like no other magazine and we want you to trust everything you read here. If you don't then you can simply stop buying it. That's how confident we are that you'll love **Play**. Promise.

PLAY

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Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

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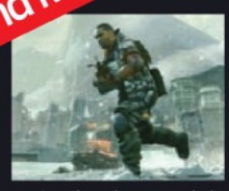
"What people think they know about this period is definitely not everything, and is probably wrong." – Mark Lamia, Treyarch studio head and Call Of Duty: Black Ops developer, p.11

Killzone 3: released 28 February 2011 with full 3D and Move support



Buddy Up

Expect much more help from your allies like Rico. "The friendly AI, in particular Rico, has had an overhaul," Ter Heide said. "He is now able to revive the player and also perform these brutal melees while overall just being a better buddy for the player." Co-op rumours may or may not have a leg to stand on, though. We're not sure yet.

The 3D Challenge

opinion

Play editor Keith Hennessey ponders the potential impact of 3D on gaming

3D, IT JUST won't die. Over the past few decades it's repeatedly tried to rise up and integrate itself into our entertainment media but never has the push been so big as we are experiencing right now both on the big screen and the small. Sony has set out its stall and, like it or not, 3D is a big part of that. Alongside Blu-ray, the PS3 and its BRAVIA range, Sony has the perfect Trojan horse for getting 3D into our home and establishing it as a viable viewing medium once and for all.

So fast has the revolution gained momentum that just days after the first 3D ready screens were released we were playing 3D games on our PS3 – a few token download games were the 3D guinea pigs and an extremely slick (if unremarkable) job was done on those to show gamers how the tech could play a part in the entertainment evolution but it was the new games that interested us most.

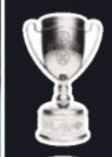
MotorStorm: Apocalypse certainly benefitted from an additional level of depth as debris, tyres and even people were hurled out of the screen at high speed and *Killzone 3* also proved more engaging when viewed from behind 3D lenses. Nevertheless while these seem to have benefitted from a transition to 3D, at present it's more on an aesthetic level than an immersive one. Though HUDs and characters were pin sharp (background detail does look a little soft) I still think we're some way off from turning a spot of visual enhancement into a gaming revolution that everyone will be part of.

> Killzone 3 proved more engaging from behind 3D lenses

The potential is clear even at this early stage though – once developers have time to spend working with 3D we're sure to get some unique experiences but for now 3D games might just be for the hardcore looking for something to justify their outlet on that shiny new BRAVIA.

PLAY TEAM TROPHIES

Things the Play team has achieved this month



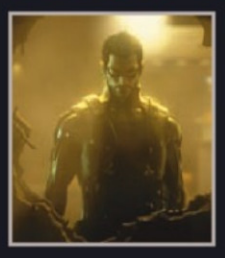
PLATINUM: GAVIN was crowned the winner of the 2010 Manowar Air Guitar Championship and contracted what we're calling Metal Fever.

GOLD: ALI has invested in a small collection of pre-owned PS2 games that includes carp fishing, golf, chess and importantly *Gitaroo Man*.

SILVER: KEITH was reported by those in attendance to have carried out best man duties at his brother's wedding with great skill and even a few laughs.

BRONZE: JON seemingly broke members of the Media Molecule development team with ponderings of what games could be made using *LittleBigPlanet 2*.

Need To Know IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS



Cyber-Punk Reading

Square Enix has teamed up with Del Rey Books to publish a novel based on the *Deus Ex* universe written by James Swallow. *Deus Ex: The Icarus Effect* will have characters and plot elements that will cross over with Eidos Montreal's upcoming game, *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*. Both are due out in 2011.

Devil Kings Returns

Sengoku Basara – better known to some as *Devil Kings* – is returning on the PS3 with *Sengoku Basara: Samurai Warriors* and has finally been confirmed for release in Europe this coming 15 October. With more than 12 characters to play as and hundreds of warriors on screen, it promises to be a riot.

3D Warning From Sony

With 3D gaming now here, Sony has updated its PS3 terms and conditions to include some warnings concerning prolonged 3D sessions. Lengthy breaks are recommended, particularly if you're feeling discomfort with your eyes. Children under six are particularly vulnerable according to Sony.

Death From Above

Enemy AI in *Killzone 3* is going to be even more exciting than before, according to senior producer Steven Ter Heide. "In *Killzone 3* we have much larger environments, allowing for multiple routes for the player but that means your buddies and the enemies have that larger environment to play with as well. That already provides a better experience as the AI has more room to show its stuff. We also have some exciting new enemies and mechanics in the game that the AI can work with."

The End Of Sev?

We asked Ter Heide whether *Killzone 3* would be wrapping up Sev's story, but he wouldn't be drawn in by our questioning. "I think we're quite busy with *Killzone 3* to be looking any further at this point, also why would we share that with you when we have so much to talk about with *Killzone 3* still." And we would have got away with it too if it weren't for those pesky kids.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

Guerrilla is taking things up a notch with Killzone 3

In an exclusive interview with **Play**, *Killzone 3* developer Guerrilla Games has admitted that it thinks it could have done a great deal more with *Killzone 2*, but is looking to make a massive leap forward with its latest game. *Killzone 2* was very well received by critics who in particular praised the game's graphics and enemy AI, but Guerrilla isn't resting on its laurels and has already identified the key areas in which it wants to make improvements for *Killzone 3*.

"The critical success [of *Killzone 2*] certainly provided some great momentum," senior producer Steven Ter Heide told us. "We still feel we can, and need to do better, though. There is a lot of ambition in the team to push even further. We have learned so much from *Killzone 2*, and have a much clearer understanding of what we are capable of doing and where we want to take the game."

> Guerrilla isn't resting on its laurels and has identified the areas where it wants to make improvements for Killzone 3

Many people would, of course, agree with Ter Heide that while *Killzone 2* was impressive in many areas its greatest asset was the promise it held for the future. Guerrilla had clearly got its collective head around the challenges of the PS3 hardware. Being able to draw on that experience has been valuable.

"It is great to be able to go back to *Killzone 2* and highlight certain enemy encounters or visual tricks or level layouts," Ter Heide admitted. "It helps to understand what made these things work well and then reapply them to *Killzone 3*. In terms of development, we have a mature tool set now combined with lots of experience in the team, so we always think that at the end of the project, we've got the most out of the hardware or the team, but we always find better ways of doing things. And then there is the community, of course, we have a very 'vocal' fan base that we often interact with."

The most important thing for Guerrilla is that the changes it's making for *Killzone 3* makes the game a richer and deeper experience than before. Variety is seemingly the watchword for the developer at the moment. "We really want to provide a lot of different experiences throughout not only the course of one level but throughout the entire game," Ter Heide said. "The basis is still shooting and making that fun, but we're also introducing new elements to that such as shooting while flying on an Intruder, hopping around in a Jetpack and wreaking havoc with a rocket launcher that is the mother of all rocket launchers."

And now *Killzone* is being positioned as the mother of all shooting franchises, put forward by Sony as its leading light at E3 this year and matching rival shooters for press where once it was the underdog. It's a pressure and expectation that Ter Heide is enjoying. "I think every game developer appreciates being able to take the centre stage and show what his game is all about," he said. "Being able to reach such a large audience with what you do is an amazing experience."

TOP 5 MIGHTY FRIGHTS

The great horror games of PlayStation's past

SURVIVAL HORROR AS a genre seems to be struggling this generation, too often failing to get the jumps it's looking for. Plenty of games have managed it in the past, though, so what do the likes of *Dead Space 2* have to live up to?

Silent Hill 2

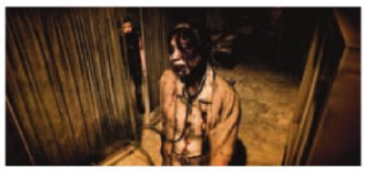
Proof that being scary doesn't need massive shocks or huge musical scores. Being scary isn't always about jumps or body horror. Sometimes it can just be writing on a wall.

Project Zero

More Japanese horror as they've been the most consistently good at scaring us over the years. *Project Zero* gave you a camera and that was it. Surviving its four chapters from there was up to you.

Resident Evil

By today's standards it may seem rather tame and sure, but for scares and those little unforeseeable moments the first *Resident Evil* was a trendsetter for games to follow.



Siren: Blood Curse

Like *Project Zero* and *Silent Hill*, *Siren* is one of the few Japanese horror games to have translated well into this generation. By keeping itself simple its scares are much more impactful.

Dead Space

While it owes a lot to *Resi 4*, *Dead Space* did what Capcom failed to do and that's keep the game terrifying. It may wear off after a while, but the presentation and execution of *Dead Space* is superb.

The Science Of Scares

Visceral talks about how it gets you jumping in Dead Space 2

Speaking exclusively with **Play** recently, Visceral Games' executive producer Steve Papoutsis revealed some of the studio philosophy behind how it makes horror games like upcoming sequel *Dead Space 2*. For the dev it is about more than just big jumps and gore, but drawing the player in with something believable, even in a sci-fi universe like *Dead Space*'s.

"What we've found, though, is the more relatable a situation, the better chance you have of a person reacting to it," Papoutsis told us. "That's why we didn't go with the extreme high-fantasy science fiction where's there's magic almost, because then it starts getting into this place where anything is possible and as a person you don't really understand that world, and once something odd happens it's just like 'oh, that's what happens there.'"

To that end Visceral has tried to make *Dead Space* as believable as possible, from the general technology of the world to the deformities of the Necromorphs. "If you're in a world like *Dead Space* and it's very realistic, then all of a sudden you see a horrible Necromorph with its jaw removed you're like 'shit! That could happen to me at the dentist! That's nasty!'," Papoutsis explained. "So, you immediately have an emotional response to it and I think that's how we've gone about our brand of horror."

The final word on such things comes from playtesting and Visceral leaves no stone unturned in that area either. "We do extensive focus testing at Visceral where we'll bring in people that may have played the first one or may have never played any kind of *Dead Space*," confirmed Papoutsis. "What's interesting is sometimes people are like 'I really need more things to jump out at me,' then some people are like 'every time I go up to something I know something's going to jump out at you.' So you have to take that feedback and deconstruct what they really want, because it's not always evident in the feedback that they give you."

> You have to take people's feedback and deconstruct what they really want

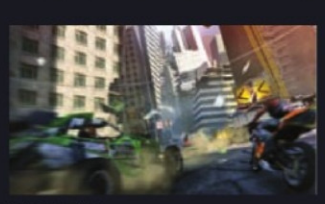
Finding a balance between what people ask for and what they really need to keep them engaged was something *Dead Space* did well last time, so we have high hopes for what *Dead Space 2* can achieve.

3D: Good Or Evil?

An even-handed look at Sony's 3D gaming revolution

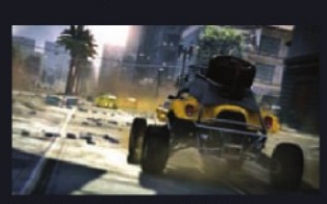
THE GOOD

IMMERSION Adding 3D to a game helps to draw you into the experience. By having objects flying around you and feeling like you're right in the middle of the game, 3D offers whole new levels of involvement.



DEPTH Being able to see 'into' the game may not seem like a big deal, but having a sense of depth is a great help in lots of games. Driving games in particular seem to benefit as it helps you to judge corners and obstacles better.

UNIQUE The PS3 is the only home console offering 3D right now in your home. The games are already coming through and pretty much all of Sony's major releases in the next few months will be supporting 3D.



NEW EXPERIENCES With the effects we've mentioned there's a chance new genres could emerge that use 3D and offer brand-new gameplay ideas. We have high hopes for something like motion control.

TOP 3D GAMES MotorStorm: Apocalypse, WipEout HD

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A Creative Conflict

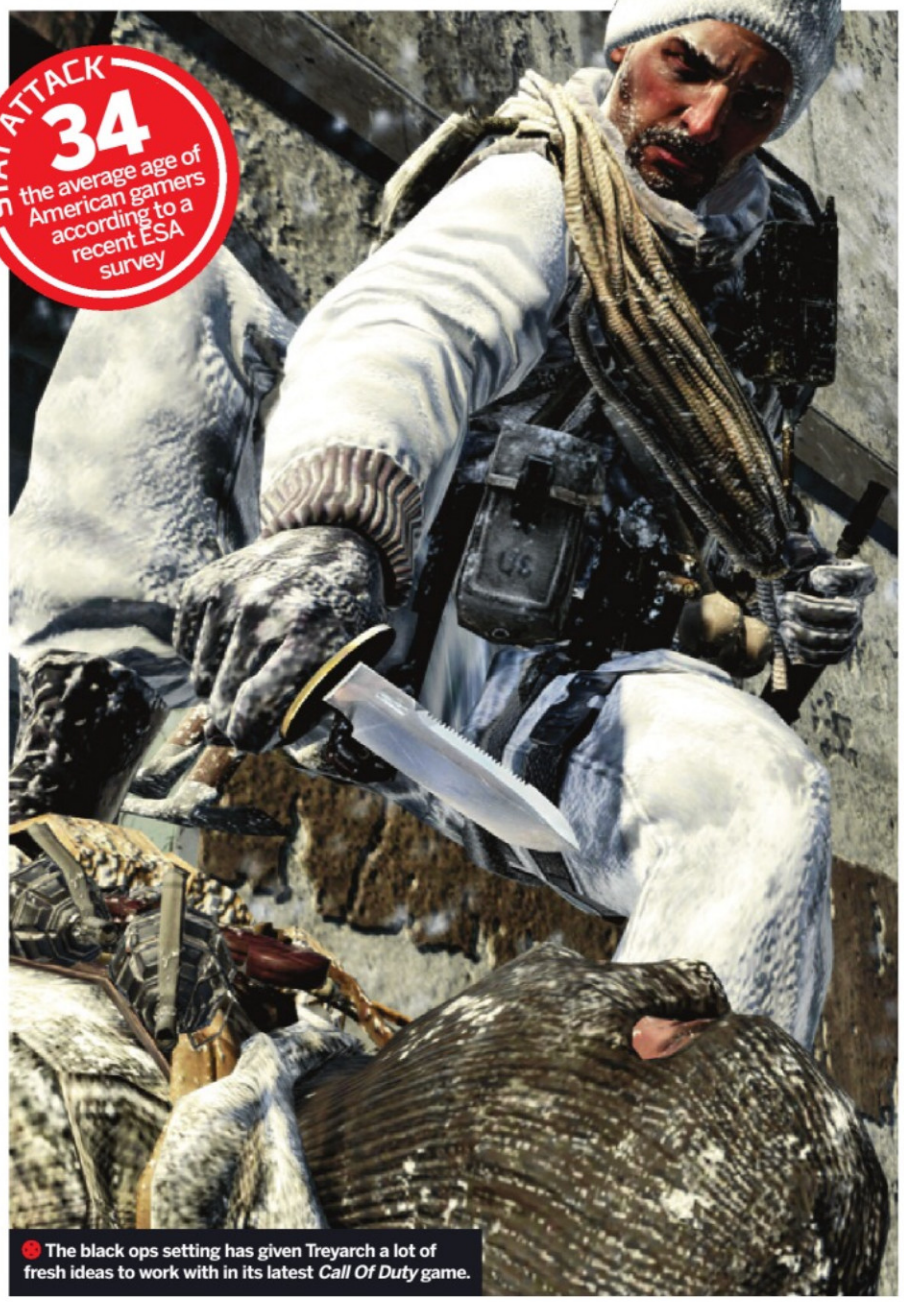
Treyarch finds 'fertile ground' in Black Ops

Working within the unknown and unknowable has proved to be the perfect gaming arena according to Treyarch, who revealed exclusively to **Play** that using black ops as its backdrop for the next *Call Of Duty* has been very productive. The fact that we can never know and will never know what really happened, plus the elite nature of the troops involved have given Treyarch almost limitless licence to invent and create events for the game.

"Nothing they did could be known about, so for us it was just this totally fertile ground," Treyarch studio head Mark Lamia explained to us. "And creating something in this era, doing *Black Ops*, it was a totally ownable space for us to create this game. It was all inspired by what could have happened, or what did happen, or what we didn't know about what happened." It all sounds a little confusing, but at its heart *Black Ops* is looking to build on stories of the Cold War to show you some hidden truths. "What people think they know about this period is definitely not everything, and is probably wrong," Lamia added.

What's more, because covert operations in this time were incredibly important, all requests from these soldiers were accepted without question, meaning they got what they wanted when they wanted it. The perfect gaming scenario in other words according to Lamia. "What they told us is that they would literally go into the armoury and then pick what they wanted, much like we would do," he told us. "It's anything but a videogame, but as soon as they start talking about that stuff, you can imagine as game makers we're like, wow, that's the kind of thing that we like to do before we think about our levels."

STAT ATTACK
34
the average age of American gamers according to a recent ESA survey



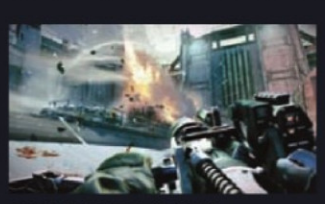
The black ops setting has given Treyarch a lot of fresh ideas to work with in its latest *Call Of Duty* game.

THE BAD

DISORIENTATION From headaches to dizziness we've heard a whole range of side effects to playing 3D games. It's too early to say whether this is something we'll get used to but short sessions are advised.

SIX EYES If you already wear glasses then adding the 3D goggles to the mix isn't very comfortable or practical. It can work over some glasses, but if they're large or oddly shaped it can be an issue.

SQUARE PEGS Trying to squeeze 3D into a game doesn't always work. Games running at 720p and 30fps can suffer from having to produce twice as many images to get the 3D effect. 3D needs to be built in from the start.



GOLD RESERVES It may not cost a lot to make the PS3 3D compatible and 3D games shouldn't cost more, but buying a new TV so soon after many would have bought an HD one is asking a lot.

POOR 3D GAMES Killzone 3, Pain

QUESTION

How alive is I Am Alive?

IT'S BEEN MISSING for a while now and has switched dev teams since it was announced, but could Ubisoft's mysterious survival game *I Am Alive* still be coming to PS3? We take a look at the likely factors that could make it happen.

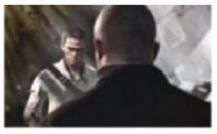
New Trailer

While there was no big announcement a new trailer for *I Am Alive* was released on the quiet. Why the lack of fanfare? We're really not sure, but it did lead to a lot of speculation that an exclusive was in the offing.

Only On PS3?

Since Ubisoft's E3 conference was before Sony's some thought the release from Ubisoft meant a reveal during Sony's conference, but this didn't happen. What could have happened?

Right Here, Right Now



The trailer didn't reveal much but it did tease a Spring 2011 release date. As such Ubisoft could have been looking to concentrate on more immediate releases.

gamescom

What this all seems to point towards is some kind of new reveal at this year's gamescom in Cologne. That's just around the corner and might better suit Ubisoft's European roots. Although the game's being developed in Shanghai, so maybe that doesn't work either.

It's all part of the plan

Could Ubisoft be playing with us? Could the doubt and suspicion surrounding *I Am Alive* actually be a ploy to give the game another layer of mystique. Are we actually all taking part in one big alternate reality game?

ANSWER:

Seemingly alive, but in hiding

5 of the biggest TURNCOATS

The developers who jumped ship

> INSOMNIAC

We didn't need a contract for Insomniac to stay PlayStation faithful – *or so we thought*. It was announced earlier this year that Insomniac was going multiformat and an exclusive relationship beginning back in 1996 with *Disruptor* (87% **Play** 14) had come to an end.

> BUNGIE

Bungie was snapped up by Microsoft in 2000 on the back of its early demos of something called '*Halo*'. Seven years later and after making hundreds of millions of dollars it was independent again, soon after entering a multiformat publishing deal with Activision.

> CRYTEK

One of the most outspoken developers when it came to consoles, Crytek never actually handled any of the *Far Cry* versions that came to PlayStation. The upcoming *Crysis 2* has seen an astounding change of tack for the German devs, though (can you spell 'money'?).

> SONY

Some of our readers may not know this, but Sony Imagesoft were once a multiformat publisher, releasing the likes of *Last Action Hero* and *3 Ninjas Kick Back* on 16-bit consoles. It's unsurprising this era came to an end with the PlayStation's release.

> SEGA

One of the biggest about-turns off all time came from Sega, who became a multiformat publisher following the Dreamcast's death. If 15 years ago you'd have said it would have been making new *Sonic* games for PlayStation, we'd have laughed in your face.

Sucker Punch has learnt a lot from the other developers in the Sony dev community, such as Media Molecule and Naughty Dog.

Suckers For PlayStation

Sucker Punch explains why it loves working with Sony

Speaking exclusively to **Play** at its Seattle studio, Sucker Punch reaffirmed its commitment to working exclusively with Sony and explained why it prefers to work on one console and on one game at a time. After Insomniac, makers of *Ratchet & Clank* and *Resistance*, announced it was making a multiformat game many speculated that Sucker Punch, which is an independent studio, not owned by Sony, would be the next studio to spread its wings, but we discovered that simply wasn't in the developer's nature.

"One of the big advantages for us in being a Sony-only studio is that we really can just focus on the PS3," Sucker Punch development director Chris Zimmerman explained to us. "We don't have to worry about our game running on the 360 or, God forbid, the Wii. We can have it just run on PS3 and that means that our game can take advantage of all the power that the PS3 has."

It's not just a question of tech, though, as Sucker Punch enjoys working within a tight-knit development community under Sony. "We feel a good kind of pressure when we are among teams with the storytelling quality of Naughty Dog or the creative quality of Media Molecule and the unbelievable levels of execution that Insomniac can achieve year in and year out," studio co-founder Brian Fleming said. "There are so many good studios that inspire us and challenge us that we strive to reach their levels and go beyond them in our own way. It is the best fraternity of game developers to be with, so it's a real privilege to be a part of that family."

> We still feel a bit like the younger red-headed stepchild of the group

The end results, according to Zimmerman, are proof that this single-platform approach is paying off. "The games that are working hard to make their PS3 versions great are better than the best games on the Xbox," he said. "If you look at *Uncharted 2*, that's a game that you actually can't do on Xbox no matter how clever you are, there's just more processing power on the PS3. *inFamous 2* is going to be the same way. You'll look at it and see that there's no way we could have done this game on 360."

Having said all that Sucker Punch still feels a little like the runt of the litter when it compares itself to the other studios Sony works with. "We still feel a bit like the younger red-headed stepchild of the group," Fleming joked. "The Naughty Dog guys have been doing this since before we had a company, same with Insomniac and we just try to do our best and not let those people down."

YOUR SAY

The Best Of The Bunch

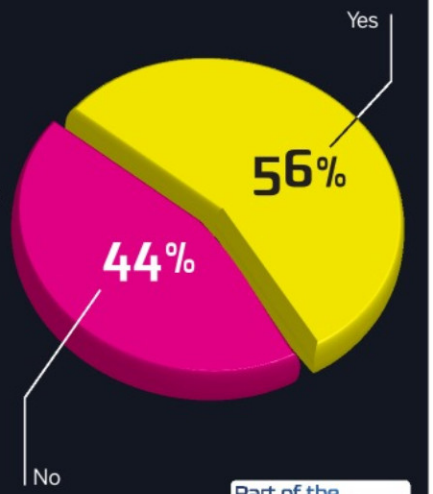
Is Killzone 3 the biggest game coming to PS3 in the next year?

SONY PUT KILLZONE 3 front and centre of its E3 presentations and is making it compatible with 3D and Move, cementing its place as one of the PS3's most important releases in the coming 12 months. However, is it the biggest game in the eyes of PS3 fans? Well, if our forum poll was anything to go by opinion was split. Those familiar with the series seem excited while others still need convincing.

I think that *Killzone 3* probably is the biggest game of 2010/2011. *Killzone 2* was a beautiful game without 3D, so *Killzone* in 3D will be amazing! To be honest I'm not convinced that the PS Move will improve it in anyway. I just cant see it being natural to use – **robinz26**

I'm sure it's going to be a wonderful game for Sony but, with a gap of just one year between this one and the previous, I don't see a big enough time frame to make it different enough from *KZ2*, apart from some snow levels, 3D and Move support. I wasn't a fan of the *KZ2* controls either, they were slow and sluggish – **the bossman**

Err... *GT5* anyone? – **tedcurly**



Join the Play Nation by signing up to our forum at www.play-mag.co.uk/forum

Part of the NOW Gamer Network

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REASONS WHY...

LA Noire Is A Game Changer

NEW WAYS TO PLAY With all the facial animation and the feedback it gives you, *LA Noire* should take the crime genre to a whole new level. Beyond the odd point-and-click adventure and *CSI* cash-ins we haven't seen much of that kind of game.

ROCKSTAR RAMPS UP *LA Noire* is another new IP from Rockstar that could really take off. After *Red Dead Redemption* and with *Agent* on the way, Rockstar is about so much more than *GTA* these days.

ALL GROWN UP With its looks and potential gameplay *LA Noire* is one of those games that could really make a splash in the mainstream. With Rockstar behind it we wouldn't bet against it.

BODY LANGUAGE Team Bondi, *LA Noire*'s developer, is creating every detail of the actors' performances and it claims you'll be able to read people's body language in the game to work out if they're lying to you.

TECH SAVVY The Depth Motion tech being used to capture actor performances for *LA Noire* is revolutionary and is creating some of the most realistic videogame characters to ever grace a games console. It's an amazing thing to behold.

One Of A Kind

MotorStorm is completely unique says developer

MotorStorm is unlike anything else on the market and that has made it all the more important to get *MotorStorm: Apocalypse* right, according to game director Simon Barlow. Getting the balance between new features and established gameplay is the hardest part he explained but, even so, Evolution Studios has managed to find plenty of room for manoeuvre with its latest game.

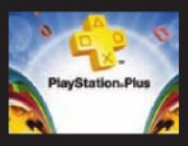
"*MotorStorm* is a unique proposition, it almost sits on its own in the racing genre – so that's critical to us, to keep that core DNA the same," Barlow insisted. "It's got to be multiple vehicles, it's got to be multiple routes, the handling has got subtle nuances to it that just sell you on *MotorStorm*, the boost system is unique to *MotorStorm* – all of these core features, we had to keep them the same."

However, *Apocalypse* is clearly doing new things within that framework, turning the idea of urban racing on its head by setting *MotorStorm* in the middle of a natural disaster zone. "It would be simple for us to say it's in a city and that's it, but we didn't want to do that," Barlow said.

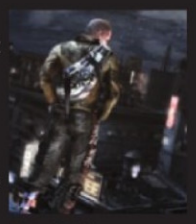
"We started exploring a few ideas and one we kept coming back to was 'we could just set it during an earthquake'. And it is cool! It gives us so much, really, it turns the city into this kind of urban playground, so instead of you just being able to race on the city streets and stuff like that, you've now got an environment that changes dynamically and it pulls in some of that core *MotorStorm* DNA again: the ability to gain massive air time on these huge jumps, take huge banked corners and things like that."

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

What's the PSN missing? These few things at least.



1 PlayStation Plus 'infrastructure tax' When PSN was totally free we could let Sony off for not providing a service as fully fleshed out as Xbox Live. Now there is extra income from the PS+ scheme we fully expect general improvements to the quality of PSN – for everyone. It's like council tax, in a way.



2 More full games Not that Minis and standard PSN releases aren't 'proper' games, but we mean the likes of *Burnout Paradise*, *Section 8* and *inFamous*, which have all been released in full to download. More like this please – we can't be bothered with discs any more.

3 Downloadable PS2 games The previous point leads us to this one, where we must ask – nay, *demand* – re-releases of PS2 games over PSN. HD remakes on Blu-ray are all well and good, but cheapo online releases would be a goldmine for gamers and for Sony.

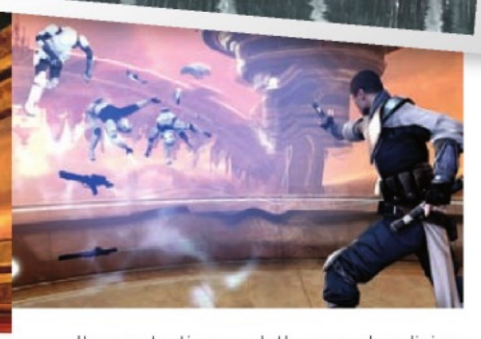
4 MMOs We know some are already on their way, so this isn't exactly an outlandish request. It's just having seen so much of the likes of *Final Fantasy XIV* recently we can't help but crave some MMO delights over PSN to take over our lives.

5 Free cross-game chat A modified re-entry for cross-game chat, which now comes under the proviso that it should only come if it will come for *everyone*. No PS+ only caveats can apply, otherwise we'll get a strop on.

WWWTS news:

All the *Monkey Island* remakes and re-releases are now available on PSN. Go mad!

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II



Q&A

Writer and producer on LucasArts' Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II Haden Blackman tells Play how the Force is even stronger in this one

There have been dozens of different *Star Wars* games over the years, some more memorable than others. Were you mindful of wanting *The Force Unleashed* to be one of the games that lasts?

As a game developer, and as somebody that's responsible for a team of people that I want to keep gainfully employed, I think we're always thinking about that. But it's more in the back of our minds, especially with *TFU*. With *TFU* we said, look, we're never going to get the chance to do a sequel if we don't make this as good as it could possibly be and that's why the story ends with him... had I known conclusively that there was going to be a sequel, I probably would not have killed Starkiller at the end of *TFU*. But that's what felt right for that story, and I think made it a more powerful story. So I would like to think that we don't think about it to the detriment of the game that we're building at that time.

But now you *are* making a sequel and Starkiller is dead. Except he's not. Or is he? The player character is a clone of Starkiller. Or is he?

When we made the decision to just get [the idea of him being a clone] out at the beginning it freed us up to then focus on making it a personal story. And then when we came up with the notion of – what if Kota questions it a quarter of the way through the game? – that allowed us to play off the tension that we know is going to exist with fans. Some fans are going to love the idea that he's a clone and some fans won't, and we wanted to use that tension to our advantage.

> My guilty secret is that I wasn't a big Star Wars fan before I started at LucasArts

Ah well, *Star Wars* is no stranger to continuity clashes anyway, right?

That is the greatest misconception about *Star Wars*. When I first started at LucasArts, almost 13 years ago, I had that same fear and there were people at LucasArts who were like, 'oh my god, you're gonna run into all these continuity issues and stuff.' And the reality is that Lucasfilm licensing has done such a good job making sure everything fits that as creators we don't have to worry a lot about that. There's a ton of access to information and they're really good about letting us add new things. I would say, from talking to other people who've worked on other big licences with other big licence holders, we have far more leeway than almost every other major licensee that I've talked to.

It must be almost like writing fan fiction sometimes...

My guilty secret is that I wasn't a big *Star Wars* fan before I started at LucasArts. I loved the movies, I think I'd read one or two of the novels and a couple of the comics, but I wasn't a huge *Star Wars* fan.

I did have a room-mate who was a huge *Star Wars* fan and the day of my job interview I woke up and there were Post-It notes all over our apartment with trivia questions on them, and I got asked some trivia questions in the interview that he had written down. Like, I didn't know the name of Boba Fett's ship, which to me now seems like, really?

It was starting work there and realising that there's this whole cohesive, authentic universe that made me more of a fan. And I'm overjoyed to get to play in that every day.

And your design team gets to play around with a combination of three different physics engines – DMM, Euphoria and Havok – every day, which must also be a lot of fun...

The designers were just scratching the surface of what they could do with these technologies in the first game. They've now had their experience on the original *TFU*, three DLC levels and the *TFU II* development to build up their library and repertoire of skills. But they're still experimenting. They'll mess around with the sliders on DMM and invent some brand-new material, like a jelly. The thing I'm most excited about is the carbonite trooper that will actually freeze you and turn you into DMM, and then shatter you. And that's something that was inconceivable in *TFU* because all the tech came on so late.

Force powers are going to be ramped up even further in *The Force Unleashed II*.

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STAT ATTACK
32% of the UK population now considers themselves gamers according to the ELSPA

Online And Mobile

Final Fantasy XIV producer backs MMOs on PSP

Speaking recently to **Play**, *Final Fantasy* producer Hiromichi Tanaka revealed that he believes handhelds like the PSP could well be ideal platforms for the MMO market. Developers have yet to really exploit this mobile market with only a few games offering online multiplayer and none offering anything like the scope of PC MMO titles. Tanaka seems to believe that can and will change.

"It's definitely possible," he assured us. "Both DS and PSP have networks so it's definitely possible, but the CPU of these mobile consoles are much lower spec when compared to home consoles or PC so that could be the aspect that causes difficulty when you want to transfer a console MMO to handheld. If you want to make one custom built for the technology, this is more possible."

So, new tech may be needed and it would probably take a lot of investment to pull it off, but with the payoff that the MMO market could provide, it could very easily be Square Enix and *Final Fantasy* that makes the first big move.

War And Pieces

Kratos has more stories to tell according to God Of War author

Speaking to **Play**, *God Of War* novel author Robert E Vardeman revealed his belief that Kratos and the universe he belongs to could easily support further stories above and beyond those in the games so far. The first novelisation of the original *God Of War* game from Titan Books is already on shelves and Vardeman is currently hard at work on the second. As he has become more familiar with the characters of the game he seems to have grown to appreciate Kratos more and more.

"The hero on a quest is the mainstay of mythology, and Kratos fits this mould well," Vardeman told us. "His single-minded mission turns him into a force of nature, the irresistible force that cannot be stopped. Throughout, his tortured spirit drives him. So, yes, he is a substantial character who must carry out the will of the gods but does so for his own reasons. This conflict of motives makes him a great, if troubled, hero."

As such he thinks more books would not only make sense, but that it would almost be a waste not to expand on Kratos's story further, perhaps dipping back into his past. "Beyond the games' plots are so many potential story ideas where Kratos would be a perfect fit that it would be a shame if there weren't auxiliary books to fill in the details of his quest as well as stories while a minion of Ares (or even a Spartan commander before he met the Barbarian King)," Vardeman seemed to plead. "There are so many exciting possibilities to expand the adventures of the Ghost of Sparta."

Read More! Get the full interview at www.play-mag.co.uk/interview

Date change Ace Combat: Joint Assault now flying in on 03 September

PLAY Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

1 Red Dead Redemption Rockstar
Still top, but maybe not for long as the summer drought ends and the gaming season kicks off. **92%**

2 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa EA
Meanwhile the fact that the World Cup is over doesn't appear to have dented sales of this game. **70%**

3 Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 Activision
Another game taking advantage of these past few quiet months, *MW2* holds strong. **94%**

4 God Of War III Sony
Kratos is beginning to fall, but he will hopefully hang in there for a little while longer. **88%**

5 Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4 Warner Bros.
Word of mouth and the strength of the brand has done this latest Lego game the world of good. **79%**

6 UFC Undisputed 2010 THQ
Hanging in there, but the latest *UFC* is apparently a sales disappointment for THQ. **88%**

7 Demon's Souls Namco Bandai
Much to our surprise *Demon's Souls* is actually doing very well in the UK. **92%**

8 Split/Second Disney
Split/Second has outlasted *Blur* in our chart as Bizarre's racer fell away a little after launch. **90%**

9 NEW Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 EA
The golfing fanatics cannot be stopped even though this latest game isn't all that great. **60%**

10 NEW Naughty Bear 505 Games
Another game that isn't all that great, *Naughty Bear* still managed to get attention. **64%**

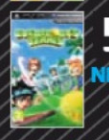
PSP CHART

1 Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker Konami
One of the best games to come to the PSP and sales are reflecting that. PlayStation fans love *MGS*. **92%**

2 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa EA
You might have thought this game would tumble now, but it's going nowhere until *FIFA 11* arrives. **65%**

3 ModNation Racers Sony
The Mod spirit is clearly a winner on the PSP as people find plenty of karting time when on the bus. **70%**

4 LittleBigPlanet Sony
We're keeping our ear to the ground on a possible sequel now *LBP 2* has been revealed for PS3. **90%**



5 NEW Everybody's Tennis Sony
By the team who brought you *Everybody's Golf*, this was unlikely to flop. Arcade tennis brilliance. **88%**

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.

INSTANT EXPERT

All of the pros with none of the prose

THEORY TEST
The game uses the Kessler syndrome theory as its base. The theory is about low orbit objects colliding around Earth making space travel too risky. Such an event would cause chaos on the surface.

NINJA PACK
As Itagaki left, a number of Team Ninja employees followed him out of the door. For a short time they called themselves Tokyo Vikings.

NEW BEGINNINGS
Devil's Third is being created by Valhalla Game Studios, a brand-new dev team formed by Tomonobu Itagaki, formerly of Tecmo's Team Ninja. Valhalla includes a number of Team Ninja veterans.

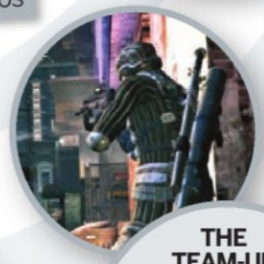
BLOODY BRILLIANT
THQ has joked that it's trying to get *Devil's Third* down to an 18 rating suggesting that it's currently thought to be too gory to be passed by censors. Itagaki's games have often been noted for their violence and this one seems no different.

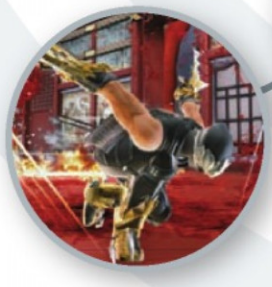
THE BREAK-UP
Itagaki famously quit Tecmo and sued the company in 2008 amid a storm of accusations from both sides, but that was settled recently.

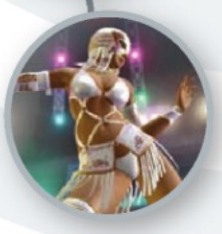
DEVIL'S THIRD

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Valhalla Game Studios
ETA: 2012

NINJA INFLUENCE
Itagaki will still be looking to use his experience of close-quarter combat and gore from *Ninja Gaiden* to make *Devil's Third* more visceral.





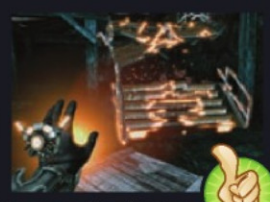


NEW GROUND
Devil's Third is a brand-new genre for Itagaki being a third-person shooter rather than a beat-'em-up or action game like *Dead Or Alive* and *Ninja Gaiden* were respectively.

THE TEAM-UP
Valhalla's inexperience with shooters was one of the reasons it chose to partner with THQ, which has a strong history in the area.

DOS & DON'TS

Important lessons from Play this month



DO: Give *Singularity* a playthrough as it's not as bad as you might have feared. Raven is really coming of age as a developer.

DON'T: Assume that *Toy Story 3* is a piece of crap movie tie-in. It's actually quite a smart action game with some great moments.

DO: Give serious consideration to dusting off that PSP if you didn't already for *MGS* because *Everybody's Tennis* is excellent.

DON'T: Buy the 3D pack from PSN if you don't have a 3DTV. That would be rather stupid. Get the TV first, then the games.

Read our reviews of all these games starting on page 93

PLAY CREATES, SHARES WITH... SMACKDOWN VS RAW 2010

This month's Play creations from the big games on PS3

MOTOKO KUSANAGI The 'Major' from *Ghost In The Shell* has a specially designed, super strong and super heavy cyborg body, making her the perfect soldier. The big question is can she stand up to the might of the Diva roster.

PSYLOCKE One of our all-time favourite X-Women and a proven fighter, we can't get enough of seeing Psylocke in games. Wrestling doesn't allow much room for her psychic abilities, but she's clearly dressed for the role.

ICO The stick-wielding hero of *Ico*, is clearly a young man born for the hardcore circuit. Shame that doesn't exist any more. At least there's still the ECW title to play for, but wait WWE dumped that for a PG-13 friendly show.

Smackdown Vs Raw 2010 was reviewed in Issue 185, available from the Imagine eShop

Made something cool in a game?
Send an image to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk and share it with the world.

opinion

MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

Japan's fastest-growing developer teams up with an international animation giant

Will PS3-owning Europeans really get *Ni No Kuni*?

OUR MAN IN JAPAN

PlayStation pondering from the East

Ni No Kuni is coming to the PS3 and Japan is swooning at the thought of it. What is *Ni No Kuni* exactly? What does it mean?

Well, *Ni No Kuni* is a game that was announced for the DS last year. The name is Japanese for 'The Second World' or 'The Second Country' and it's the culmination of a partnership between Level-5 (known for the *Dark Cloud* series) and Studio Ghibli (the most internationally and domestically successful animation studio known for *Princess Mononoke* and *Spirited Away*.)

So why am I talking about a DS game? Well, it's because Level-5 dropped a bombshell announcement at its press conference in Tokyo in late June. Not only is *Ni No Kuni* coming to PS3, our favourite console is getting the best version of the game. One that sports graphics that look like a Studio Ghibli film come to life. And if you find that hard to believe bear in mind that last generation Level-5 proved it could make a game that looked like an episode of *Dragon Ball Z* on the PS2 with *Dragon Quest VIII*. Now, with the power of the PS3, it's going to make a game that looks like *Princess Mononoke*.

If you still don't understand how important that is over here then know that the partnership between Studio Ghibli and Level-5 is like a royal marriage in Japan. Aside from being renowned for its films, Ghibli is touted in the Japanese media as an example of Japanese cultural power abroad. If there's one thing Japanese news programmes like to show, it's foreigners going gaga for something Japanese and it doesn't happen all that often these days. Meanwhile, Level-5 is one of the few Japanese developer-publishers to actually find success in the current generation. The combination of the two companies is a match made in heaven that Japanese gamers would have called a pipe dream before its actual announcement. To the Japanese audience, the combination of Level-5 and Ghibli is even more tantalising than the Square Enix/Disney partnership that gave us the first *Kingdom Hearts* nearly seven years ago and that's really saying something.

> Our favourite console is going to get the best version of the game

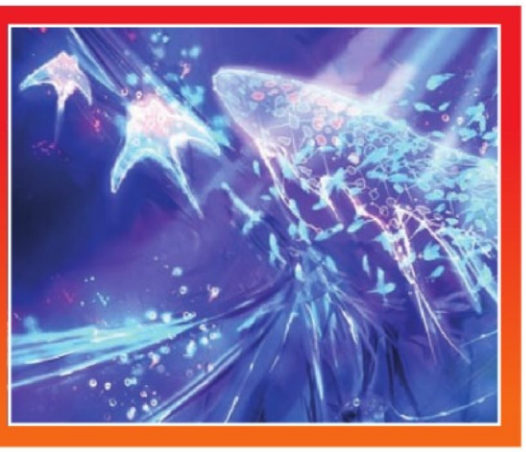
The announcement of the game for the PS3 followed hot on the heels of the news that Level-5 plans on expanding its business into the US and Europe. Previous games from the company have been published by other companies such as Square Enix and Nintendo. After Level-5 International opens its doors in Europe next year, it's likely that it will publish its own titles itself. I don't know if a company that is just getting its feet wet outside of Japan will be able to market *Ni No Kuni* to the outside world, but it probably doesn't matter that much in the long run. Level-5 is still a ways off from releasing the game in the UK. It hasn't even begun the process of localisation and translation, let alone found a publishing partner or decided to do it itself. Unfortunately for you guys outside of Japan, you will have to content yourselves with drooling over gorgeous screenshots for at least another year or two.

Level-5 shocks and delights at the same time as it announces *Ni No Kuni* for PS3.

Got a tissue?

The creator of the upcoming PlayStation 3 title, *Child Of Eden* wants the game to move you to tears. Tweeted the developer:

"I want to do a game that moves people to tears, but we're a little ways off from that. It has nothing to do with words. It'll use the power of music... we will absolutely offer an experience that can move you. Music and images, drama and experience... We've been working on something like a powerful chemical reaction. *Child Of Eden*."



Japan yawns at Move

I was on hand for the public debut of the PlayStation Move at Tokyo's World Hobby Fair this month. Having not gone to E3, I was excited to get my hands on the device. Apparently, I was the only one in Japan. The line to play with the device was one of the shortest in the venue. The longest belonged to *Mario Galaxy 2*, which was already on sale in the country. Oh dear.

The Vault

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month

Zombie Blood Energy Potion

£3.99 at www.gachaworld.com

If gaming's taught us one thing, it's that zombies have green blood. Well, countries like Germany have taught us this when they've censored violent scenes. Still, now you can drink said green blood *and* get an energy boost. Just like real blood! Except without the metallic aftertaste and social stigma drinking that comes with.

Sumo Sac Gamer Chair

£159 at www.sumolounge.com

Looking for the perfect gamer chair? We think we've found it. The gigantic Sumo Sac is the ideal perch for enjoying gaming, movies or a spot of reading. Available in a range of colours it comes with a promise that it will never go flat and that it encourages the nearest pretty girl to come sit on your lap to enjoy the comfort with you. NB only one of those promises is genuine.

Play Arts Kai pre-painted figure: Odin

£153.26 at www.play-asia.com

If you're going to insist on buying videogame-related figurines, then why not go for something that looks to be pretty much 'the best'? The price isn't to be sniffed at, but the dedicated collector will surely be over the moon with *Final Fantasy XIII*'s best character standing tall on their desk or bedroom shelf.

Antigravity Platform

£89.99 at www.iwantoneofthose.com

Welcome to the future, friends. It is a better place, where meals aren't even in pill form – we've reduced them so much they're just like inhaling a lung full of air – and we all wear tinfoil jumpsuits. As for our ornaments? Well, we suspend them on a magnet held suspended in the air by another, larger electromagnet.

MySoti
15% OFF
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This Month's Code: PlayGear195

Lucky 8

£17.15 at MySoti.com

The design could be anything it wants, really, as it's got Darth Vader on it. Good job it's actually quite nice then.

6" Scared Sackboy Figure

£8.99 at play.com

Have you ever wanted a fearful Sackboy staring at you on your desk? Well, want no more, as this lovely six-inch figurine can be yours. Frankly, we were a bit tired of Sackboy always smiling at everything, so seeing him as obviously unhappy as he is here cheered us up no end.

An evening with paper

£14.34 at MySoti.com

What do you mean origami isn't always tied in with *Heavy Rain*? Oh, okay then. We suppose it *is* nice, even without Ethan Mars' approval.

CONDITIONS: Enter discount code when placing order. MySoti.com discount code only valid on featured items between 5 August and 1 September. Visit MySoti.com for even more great T-shirts.

TacBac: Tactical Canned Bacon

$15.99 at www.thinkgeek.com

What better example for TacBac can we give than the one presented by ThinkGeek? You're under siege from a zombie army, you can't leave your building, you need sustenance – what can you do to survive? Why, canned bacon of course. Coated in enough chemical rubbish to make it last ten years – just don't read the nutritional information.

Killzone Figures

$31.99 at www.bigbadtoystore.com

Halo has had its time in the sun when it comes to games and memorabilia, now it's time for *Killzone* to take its rightful place at the top of the FPS tree. You can pick up this charming pair (a Helghast Sniper and Assault Infantry) courtesy of DC Direct who, by the why, has also announced a range of *Arkham Asylum* figures for release around the same time. So turn your games collection into an action figure collection and live out the games you've always wanted. *'Killzone 4: Harley Quinn's Revenge'*.

12" Jill Valentine

£159.99 at www.play.com

There are many things we like about Jill Valentine and one is her huge arse... nal. This 12-inch figure doesn't leave anything out as she comes complete with knives, machine guns, flash grenades, sniper rifle and a handgun as well as a load of interchangeable body parts. Jill is decked out in her BSAA uniform and wants to dispose of the infected.

Plush Subject Delta

£14.99 at www.play.com

If there's one word we wouldn't usually use to describe a Big Daddy it's 'cute' but this new plush version of Subject Delta is the exception. Re-creating the crude-looking dolls carried by the Little Sisters it has a baseball head, corkscrew drill arm and wristwatch for a face – the ultimate killing machine.

Marvel Ka Pow Headphones

£34.99 at www.forbiddenplanet.com

Want more kick in your cans? Then why not opt for these Marvel-themed headphones that feature a suitably retro design on an icy white background. If you're a lame *Spider-Man* fan you can listen to Chad Kroeger on them but our recommendation is to get the new *Iron Man 2* AC/DC album and crank your iPod up to eleven.

Tauntaun Sleeping Bag

$149.99 at www.bigbadtoystore.com

If there's one thing sure to keep you safe from the cold it's the inside of a Tauntaun and now you can experience warmth fit for a Jedi by jumping into this themed sleeping bag. As if we needed to be convinced of its awesomeness it also features a head pillow, Lightsaber zip and even printed 'guts' lining. Essential if you're going camping or visiting the frozen wastes of Hoth.

HIGH FIVE

Five of the best... Tasty Treats

Dragon Quest Slime

Approx £2 in Japan

These *Dragon Quest*-based drinks come in two flavours, blue Hoimi Cider and orange Mera Tropical, the names of which are based on spells from the game. They're unlikely to be released outside of Japan, though.

Mario Sweets

£5.99 at www.play.com

We know **Play** is a PlayStation mag so we should hate Mario, but we don't have to hate his sweets. This set contains a Super Star tin with matching candies and a Mushroom tin with cherry, raspberry or apple sours.

Pac Man Ice Cube

£4.99 at www.play.com

Fed up of watching Pac-Man chomp down on those ghosts? Well, go ahead and try it yourself by making your own ice characters. They're perfect for chilling your beverage or for making flavoured ice cubes.

PSP Candy

$4.99 at www.amazon.com

At **Play** we love our PSPs so much that at times we'd like to crack them open and feast on the gaming goo inside. Or... you could try a much tastier and cheaper way of enjoying the PSP with these raspberry and cherry candies.

PlayStation Cake

Priceless

You can't buy this over the counter, but we had it made for the PlayStation's tenth birthday and we can assure you it was one of the most delicious game-based foodstuffs we've had. In case you're wondering, it tasted like victory.

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AND FINALLY...

Where hype and hyperbole are welcome

POP STARLET LOVES ROCK BAND

At least since her songs were added to it

THEY SAY: Tween pop sensation turned almost fully fledged pop starlet Miley Cyrus has revealed that she loves *Rock Band* so much that she uses it to warm up before and between gigs. Speaking to MTV the *Hannah Montana* star revealed, "I sat in front of the TV 90 per cent of the tour, just playing *Rock Band*. It's pretty cool that now I can warm up playing my own songs on *Rock Band* and then go do it in real life. So it's pretty rad. It's a better warm-up." The tracks she's talking about were five DLC releases for *Rock Band* released in late June to coincide with her third studio album *Can't Be Tamed*.

WE SAY: Two things to ponder on this story. First, that Miley Cyrus, who has just had tracks released on *Rock Band*, would reveal that she loves the game while speaking to MTV, who happens to own Harmonix, the makers of, wait for it... *Rock Band*. We're sure that's just a coincidence of course. Second, Cyrus manages to play *Rock Band* around 90 per cent of the time she's on the road and she hasn't yet realised that her talents are dwarfed by the likes of Black Sabbath or The Rolling Stones. Frankly we would have thought playing *Rock Band* would have crushed her will to make music. She must have thicker skin than we've given her credit for.

Nathan wouldn't be seen dead with any Microsoft products.

FANBOY CENTRAL

Study reveals fanboyism strongest in gaming

THEY SAY: According to a survey conducted by Ipsos Loyalty, the game-buying public is the most brand loyal of all consumers. The study showed that compared to cars, mobile phones and even banks, over 3,000 consumers in the USA said that they were most satisfied with their gaming platform. Games consoles achieved a 'satisfaction index' of 8.31 compared to 8.02 for hotels and 7.72 for retailers, proving conclusively that gamers are the most brand loyal and fanboyish people in the world.

WE SAY: We'd argue that there's a fairly big difference between being 'brand loyal' and being a fanboy and between being satisfied with your choice of product and slavishly devoted to it. We would say all that, but we have to admit that the games industry probably is the most fanboy-infested market around. We wish we could deny it, but even though this survey doesn't really prove anything we have nothing to disprove it.

stop please

MIA Slams Violent Games

THEY SAY: Acclaimed British musician M.I.A. has slammed videogames for brainwashing kids into thinking violence is cool before being shipped off to Afghanistan where they find out it's not.

WE SAY: She actually said she'd rather her son experience fake violence to the real stuff she grew up with. She made some interesting points in fact.

Skies The Limit

THEY SAY: Blizzard, maker of *World Of Warcraft*, has teamed up with Korean Air as part of its promotion of upcoming RTS *StarCraft II*. The game is already expected to be a massive hit on release, especially in Korea.

WE SAY: Games advertised on planes? Next thing you know we'll have *Uncharted* sponsoring trains. It's madness.

Blame The Game

THEY SAY: *Grand Theft Auto* has been implicated in a botched firebombing by 16 and 12-year-old boys who had, "crossed the line from virtual reality to reality," according to a Massachusetts police chief.

WE SAY: Leaving that neither should have been playing the game, *GTA* doesn't give a Molotov cocktail recipe last time we checked.

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Go to **www.Play-Mag.co.uk** for daily updates and features

Reload

The very best of the Play Blog this month

Top 5 great games with bad graphics

5 SILENT HILL (1998) Dear God, someone put a bag over its head. *Silent Hill* is the gloomiest-looking game ever made, but it gets away with it all by making it look deliberate. It's not terrible draw distance, it's fog. It's not pop-up, it's a cross-dimensional split. It's not fuzzy textures and a low polygon count, it's distorted reality. So ugly, it's scary.

4 GRAND THEFT AUTO (1997) No one minded the 2D graphics and top-down view, but why did it have to be so horribly pixillated? It's bizarre to think that this mess came from the same studio that has since brought us four excellent 3D *GTA* games. But it was still fun, and still established one of the most successful brands ever.

3 TWISTED METAL: WORLD TOUR (1997) This was one of our first PlayStation games, and when we first started playing it, our friends were fiddling with the TV cables, convinced it should look better. We didn't care, *Twisted Metal: World Tour* is still one of the most fun games we've ever played.

2 DISGAEA: HOUR OF DARKNESS (2004) Turn-based strategy games aren't known for their graphics but even by these low standards, *Disgaea* is a right munter. Being the complicated game it is, it's important to be able to see what's going on, and the screen can become a confusing mess of fuzzy pixels. It's still utterly, utterly brilliant though.

1 BISHI BASHI SPECIAL (2000) It's the best party game ever, but is also minging to look at. Most of the animations have, like, three frames and the way digitised graphics are used in some of the mini-games makes *Pit Fighter* look good. If you'd bought this for your brand-new Mega Drive a decade earlier, you'd have been thinking, 'I thought it could do better than this...' But you wouldn't care once you invited some mates around and realised you were having more fun than you thought possible.

http://bit.ly/bRTA5P

Poor sales myths debunked

GRAND THEFT AUTO: CHINATOWN WARS
Total sales approximately... 1.5 million
How can a *GTA* title have sold less then 10 million copies? Surely this is a disaster! Nope, 1.5 million sales is pretty good for any third party handheld game.

MIRROR'S EDGE
Total sales approximately... 1.8 million
Now, given the substantial marketing campaign thrown behind it, *Mirror's Edge* did get off to a slow start but it still shifted almost 2 million units.

DJ HERO
Total sales approximately... 2 million
If you thought *DJ Hero* failed then you must've thought that it was expected to match *Guitar Hero*'s sales. At 2 million sales and a healthy mark-up on those decks, it has what it takes to bring in some serious dollarage.

ROCK BAND 2
Total sales approximately... 4 million
In December last year Harmonix laid off 39 employees. 'It must be because *Rock Band* is a failure!' people cried. No, *Rock Band 2* sold 4 million, while *The Beatles: Rock Band* clocked nearly 3 million. Those are very good, money-spinning figures for two expensive titles.

PSP
Total sales approximately... 58.7 million
The PSPgo? Yes. That failed. But the PSP as a whole? That's a winner. It had 50% less sales than the DS, but the DS is the second bestselling console ever, so selling nearly 50% as many units is very good.

http://bit.ly/aEtL6

STAT ATTACK
15,209 eagles killed in Red Dead Redemption to date

Things we'd do differently with Portal 2

1 PORTAL KOMBAT – A mischievous beat-'em-up in which the world's greatest fighters meet under the patronage of Aperture Science in fights to the death. The only problem is that Portal guns are being used around the fighters so they must avoid these pitfalls (or take advantage of them) while fighting.

2 PORTAL TURISMO – Rather than racing on set stages this involved racing around and through portals taking you from one location to another and from course to course in one seamless race.

3 PORTAL KEEPER – A little like a tower defence game, this game would see you playing as GLaDOS, attempting to kill as many test subjects as possible. Bonus points will be awarded for enticing them with cake.

4 THE SIMS: PORTAL EDITION – A slightly more sedate, but no less sadistic version of the tower defence idea, this time you would be given a whole facility of test subjects to manage and you must, for the sake of science, set them challenges and obstacles in their lives to yield results. '*The Sims: Portal Edition*' could actually be GLaDOS's origin story.

5 PORTAL-NAUTS – Developed by Double Fine Productions, naturally, '*Portal-nauts*' would actually take place inside GLaDOS's mind as you attempt (probably in vain) to sort out whatever the hell went wrong with her. The resultant world of weirdness will probably destroy you. It would be wonderful, though.

http://bit.ly/bdphFb

The most underrated games so far this year

1 ALPHA PROTOCOL People who only like shooters failed to look past the ropey combat. The ingenious dialogue and story make for a brilliant experience.

2 3D DOT GAME HEROES It's an absolutely lovely game and if you say anything different we'll stab you with a sword three times our size*. (*Not really)

3 BLUR Despite positive reviews, Activision may now be wondering why it spent a presumably large sum on Bizarre Creations. *Blur* has bombed.

4 LOST PLANET 2 What hurt this Capcom sequel was the single-player experience. Still it's superb online if you like that sort of thing.

5 RESONANCE OF FATE Some game reviewers really would be better off writing about Wii games.

http://bit.ly/du6A7X

PS3 now makes money (as well as playing games)

WHEN THE PS3 was first released, Sony was losing about $300 per console sold – such were the high manufacturing costs. This, as you can imagine, didn't fit into the company's business plan.

So it should cheer Sony up no end that it is now making money on every PS3 console sold.

If it's anything like us, Sony will now want to buy things now it's making money – we've come up with a few suggestions as to what it can buy to make life that little bit sweeter.

> HATS
Because we all love hats, right? Hats for all employees!

> KEVIN BUTLER ASSISTANTS
Sony's greatest employee of all time doesn't actually need help, but the company should want to keep him sweet. As such, nubile young assistants should be hired to aid KB.

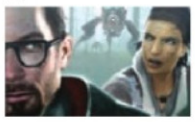
> FREE MOVE HARDWARE FOR PLAY
We don't make as much money as Sony, what with us not being a multinational corporation. As such, maybe it should use its profits to help us out. We have been loyal to the cause for nearly 15 years now, after all.

> R&D ON A SMALLER, CHEAPER PS3
Because it never hurts to have a half-serious entry in a list like this, and Sony would like to make more money, right?

That should soak up all the profit it's made for now. We'll make more suggestions once Sony has a bit more in the coffers.

http://bit.ly/cC7eYz

Top 5 craziest pre-E3 rumours



5 SOURCE ENGINE 2 W/ HALF-LIFE 2: EPISODE 3 Valve cancels its E3 event promising a surprise and the whole internet goes mad.

4 PS3 PRICE DROP AND 500GB MODEL Who needs 500GB? As for the price drop Sony doesn't see E3 as the place to announce such things.

3 STREET FIGHTER VS TEKKEN This may seem like a possibility given that Capcom likes its crossovers, but can you really see those two fitting together?

2 GTA: VICE CITY 2 Another *GTA* is a given and a return to Vice City would be welcome. Give it another year and then maybe we'll see something.

1 NEW SEGA CONSOLE This one keeps resurfacing, but Sega can't afford to do something like that.

http://bit.ly/b8sfm7

Alternative Spider-Man DLC options

> SPIDER-WOMAN: She's been around since 1978 and she's had many incarnations, but the Jessica Drew version is probably the most unique looking, having not changed her costume since her creation.

> SPIDER-MAN 2211: With four additional mechanised arms and a remit to protect the universe from Time Disruptions you would think he would fit nicely into the *Shattered Dimensions* world.

> SPIDER-MAN 1602: All the major Marvel heroes got some retro remaking for the 1602 series and Spider-Man was no different, although he gained some peculiar traits. Peter Parker became Peter Parquagh.

> SCARLET SPIDER: We're not sure how popular the Scarlet Spider is, especially since he's tied in with the much maligned *Clone Saga*, but we like Ben Reilly and his Spidey outfit. He'd be a welcome addition.

> ZOMBIE SPIDER-MAN: People love zombies. Anyway, Zombie Spider-Man would be pretty cool, but only if adding him turns the game up on its head and you have to go around eating people.

http://bit.ly/gR5jrS

Full Steam Ahead

Some thought it inevitable, others the only genuine surprise of E3 – either way, Gabe Newell's announcement that Portal 2 is headed to the PlayStation 3 will mark the debut of Valve's Steamworks suite of tools on consoles – but what does it mean for gamers?

Following a long line of third-party ports of its games, Valve, the developer behind the revered *Half-Life* franchise, will, for the first time in its history turn its attention to developing for a PlayStation console. But what makes the news so significant, in addition to Gabe Newell's continued criticism of the PS3, is the promise that Valve also plans to integrate some of its Steamworks features, making it the first non-computer format to get the treatment. "When the PlayStation 3 was introduced, I was one of the platform's biggest critics," said the Valve president. "However, Sony Computer Entertainment has proved that the PlayStation 3 is the most open platform of all the current-generation consoles and has worked extremely hard to make the platform the most desirable for consumers and developers. As such, we are delighted to announce *Portal 2* for the PlayStation 3 and believe the Steamworks support included will make it the best console version of the game."

For those not up on Steamworks or Valve's other non-gaming innovations, allow us to enlighten you. Launched in 2003, Steam is the developer's very own digital delivery platform, and one that is now ubiquitous with gaming on the PC – as such it offers content from all the major publishers, with over 1,100 games available. Valve recently claimed to have over 25 million active users registered to Steam, and although the company has traditionally declined to publish sales figures, some estimates put its hold on the digital delivery market at as much as 70 per cent. In short, it's massively successful. Steamworks is a selection of tools that work within Steam to enhance the gaming experience and Valve wants *Portal 2* to include "auto updates, community features, downloadable content, and more," adding that "the development platform will make it possible to deliver the higher level of service gamers have come to expect."

So what exactly can PS3 gamers expect from Steamworks? Auto game updates, community features and downloadable content all sound suspiciously like existing PSN features, but as Steam's burgeoning PC audience will confirm, Valve has its own way of doing things. Steam checks for updates across your library of games every time you log in – while it's too late for the third-party ports of Valve's *Orange Box* titles (oh, how we wish *Team Fortress 2* could receive retrospective Steamworks support) expect *Portal 2*, and any future Steamworks-enabled titles to subtly download the latest updates as soon as your PS3 is switched on, rather than the current inelegant method that tells you to update when you just want to play. Valve also wants to make downloadable content available in-game, with account-based micro-transactions for paid content likely. The developer

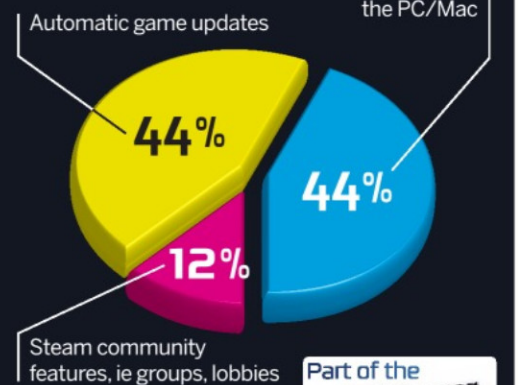
YOUR SAY

What one thing would you want Steamworks to bring to the PS3?

The automatic updates would be great, as Valve said, they have done like three updates for *TF2* on 360, because it takes so long to approve, whereas on PC there are over 100 updates, if they could just improve the game instantly it would be magnificent – **UberCool_UberGoff**

Definitely automatic updates. I'm not bothered about online saves or compatibility with the PC, etc. Knowing that your game is fully updated makes it so much easier, instead of turning on and seeing a minimum of three updates weighing in around 20 megabytes each – **the bossman**

I would love to see us PS3 guys playing PC players! We would probably get p0wned because they have the computer mouse advantage, but the technology would be cool. I wanna play against Xbox 360 players and just see how many five-year-old Americans actually start fights via headsets – **robinz26**



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Gabe Newell tells the world that *Portal 2* will be coming to PS3.

Steam In Numbers

1 million active Steam Community groups

237 countries

500 million minutes played per day

1,100 games

140 million Steam achievements unlocked

200+ gigabytes/second of bandwidth

25 million accounts

2.7 million concurrent peak players

has also promised community tools in addition to those available via the PSN; if Steam is any indication, expect the ability to create groups, add friends from within a lobby or game menu and view news, forums and more besides. It's not yet clear how the new features will be implemented (a Steam account of some sort seems likely for any retail transactions) but they'll likely operate independently of Sony, via Valve's servers, meaning two things: one, Valve will work hard to preserve the reputation of the Steam brand as a quality service, and two, it should have complete control over how that service evolves – with Sony's approval.

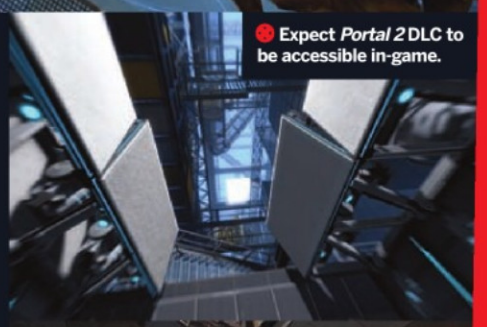
"As an industry we're undergoing a transition from an industry as a product, to entertainment as a service," Newell said at E3. "Because of that the needs of game players and game developers are evolving. More specifically it's not just about chips for rendering pixels or calculating NAV meshes, it's about giving gamers a complete social connected experience. By adopting an open approach to these challenges, the PS3 is going to excel in this area." If the latter proves to be true, Sony can ask for no better partner in enhancing the PS3's online gaming experience. Newell also mentioned Steam Cloud at E3, a feature which allows users up to 100MB of space online to store settings, user-generated content or saved games. Much like Steam on the PC, such a feature would enable you to take your game to a friend's house, log in to your Steamworks account and resume your game from where you left off.

Furthermore, there could be further big features in the works: Valve developer Erik Johnson confirmed at E3 that cross-platform compatibility between PS3 and PC for *Portal 2* co-op is "something the team is gunning for." This was also confirmed by Valve's Mike Dunkle, who added: "The plan is you will be able to play between console and PC." The Steam Play feature hasn't been mentioned with regard to PS3, but the recent launch of Steam on the Mac enabled users to pay once to play across both PC and Mac – will we get to play *Portal 2* on the PC for free if we buy a PS3 copy? Take our word for it – if Steamworks on PS3 is even marginally as brilliant as its PC counterpart, it could be the online gaming shake-up that the console has been desperate for. And it could mean further Valve PS3 games in the future, too...

> The PS3 is the most open platform of all the current-generation consoles

Left For Deaf

CROSS-GAME CHAT has long been the Holy Grail of the PSN for many gamers – with the recent launch of PlayStation Plus the issue has been big news again with some speculating that it may be added to the premium service in the future. Sony remains coy on the subject, but is there a chance that a compromise could be reached through Steamworks? As long as you're logged into a Steam account we don't see why Valve wouldn't consider a chat function – in fact voice chat "inside and outside the game" is a listed feature for Steamworks on the PC. One of the reasons Valve gave for *Left 4 Dead* being a 360-exclusive was Xbox Live's improved community features for co-op play. Will Steamworks give Valve all the impetus it needs to bring the zombie-bashing franchise to PS3 at long last?



Expect *Portal 2* DLC to be accessible in-game.

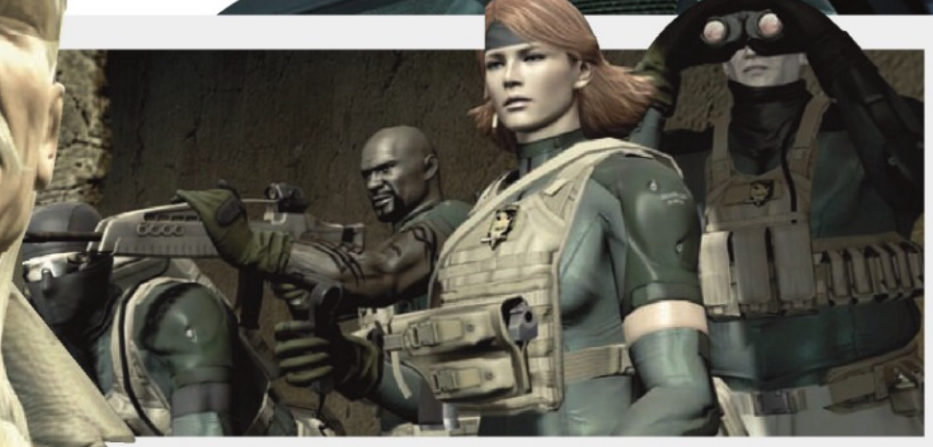
The first genuine Valve game for PS3 will also mark the debut of Steamworks on any console.

PLAY ♥'s METAL GEAR STORIES

The story behind the Metal Gear series is one that constantly confuses, irritates and bewilders. Yet we love it. Why? Well it's hard to explain, but if we must...

It's utterly ridiculous

It is pretty difficult to really appreciate the story the *Metal Gear* series has told without first acknowledging that it is completely bonkers. It's a war game that embraces pacifism; throws giant walking robots that moo at you; has an arm grafted onto a man that manages to take over its host; warns you of the scientific evidence linking smoking to lung cancer before dismissing it as smoking is (apparently) cool; and has a monkey that drinks fizzy pop all the time. It's impossible to take it all on board with a straight face – but therein lies the draw: if *Metal Gear*'s storyline were presented in as po-faced a manner as most other military-based games, we wouldn't give two hoots about it. Without this ridiculousness, it's robbed of passion and turned into a pretentious husk. With it, it's just brilliant.



The motley crew of characters

A fat man in a bomb-proof suit called FatMan. One of the most heart-wrenching exits from this mortal realm with The Boss. A woman with a death wish who cannot die, called Fortune. A psychokinetic whose strongest power is to make your pad vibrate. Oh, and that Solid/Naked Snake chap, too. He's got a suitably gruff voice, along with his endless philosophising and battlefield ethics and standards. Kojima and co also managed to make Raiden both a figure of fun *and* a pretty decent character – though we'll see where he gets taken with *Rising*. Put simply, the characters throughout the series have been nothing short of iconic – sometimes weird, sometimes inspired, but always memorable.

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The attention to detail

Those of you who have played *Peace Walker* will probably now be able to recite, from heart, the exact theory behind Mutually Assured Destruction. Those who have played any *MGS* title will likely be able to identify a Hind D by sound alone, or regurgitate the Patriots conspiracy theory without even pausing for thought. One of the reasons stories in *Metal Gear* are so overblown is thanks to the anal attention to detail – everything is explained (over-explained, some will argue) to the point that if you're only paying a bit of attention, you'll probably miss key story elements. Now, copy and pasting technical manuals as scripts isn't genius writing, that much we're sure, but it does give the back stories of *Metal Gear* that bit more credibility than in other videogame storylines. After all, even the slightest amount of detail is better than 'terrorists are attacking US interests' (we're looking at you, *SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3*).

It's endearing

Yes, it's not the most well written of all things. Yes, it gets stuck up its own bottom at times. Yes, there are some questionable elements (pervy mags, staring at ladies' bums). But at the base of *Metal Gear* stories are messages of pacifism, environmentalism, philosophical thinking and politics. You might argue the issues aren't tackled in the most succinct or intellectual manner, and you might – on many levels – be right. But at least this is a videogame talking about these issues, and not just presenting the player with a nameless war and encouraging you to kill everyone. The *Metal Gear* series has always encouraged the player to tackle the battlefield in their own way, to question everything they see and hear and to think about exactly why we fight. It's sixth form eulogising, but it's a damn sight better than the message we get from most other gaming stories.

It has lasting power

This is a videogame story that has been going on for 23 years – in-game, it covers 50 years. This is a long time both in and out of the *Metal Gear* world to come up with new elements, introduce new characters, bring back old faces, reinstate past heroes, change the motivations of a person and retcon to your heart's desire. Granted, it's also the recipe for disaster as your tale could become unattractive and confused. Even though it takes nigh-on 23 years to understand what's going on in the *Metal Gear* series, it's just good to know there's such staying power and such commitment by Kojima and his team to keep this thing going. As much as some new elements may purely be there as fan service or to wring another appearance out of a popular character, it's still bloody marvellous.

SO IT'S OVER the top, it makes little sense and a lot of people just laugh at the storylines. But we love them because of how ridiculous they are, how over the top the action can get and, simply, for how they are the perfect videogame storylines. Rather than striving for realism, Hideo Kojima and co have aimed for entertainment, imagination and fun. How can you do anything *but* love that?

Telling Tales

The industry's top developers explain why good game stories equal success...

"Story in a videogame is like story in a porn movie. It's expected to be there, but it's not that important."

This is how id Software boss John Carmack reportedly responded when designers on FPS *Doom* suggested a sequence where story was developed and no shooting happened at all.

At the time this wouldn't have seemed like a particularly controversial thing to say. In 1993 it was true of most, if not all, games. Story really didn't matter. But it wouldn't be long before a new game, one built using his Quake engine, would come along and royally own John Carmack.

"There was a general arrogant assumption that players of shooters didn't want and wouldn't care about a story; we just didn't believe this," recalls Valve's Marc Laidlaw. "We were all big fans of the FPS genre. It was, at least at the time, my favourite type of videogame, and one that seemed as if it would get the biggest benefit from the integration of storytelling techniques."

So in 1998, *Half-Life*, a true benchmark in videogame storytelling, was born. And since then John Carmack has been proven more and more wrong. David Cage, head of Quantic Dream and creator of *Heavy Rain* thinks it's obvious why.

"People love stories," he says. "Every time a new media was invented, it was used to tell stories. Cinema, television, writing, or whatever. People love stories in any country and in any period of time. Why would interactivity be the exception to this rule?"

Well, in the early days of gaming, this was because of technological constraints. The means of storytelling were limited to text and/or graphics too crude to express anything very meaningful. Plus memory and processing power were limited and were usually better channelled into making gameplay as fun as possible. In the Eighties, if you wanted story in a game, you usually had to read it off the back of the box.

But during the Nineties and Noughties, computer technology came on in leaps and bounds and videogame storytelling became not just possible, but very popular. And, as Dan Houser, Rockstar Games' co-founder and writer on *Grand Theft Auto* and *Red Dead Redemption*, explains, good storytelling and characterisation aren't just a luxury with modern hardware, they can be a necessity as well.

> *"In the Eighties, if you wanted story in a game, you usually had to read it off the back of the box"*

"We have evolved the process as the technology has allowed and *demanded*," he explains. "For example, we now do massive amounts of dialogue during missions that would not have been possible on PS2 as too much of machine's power was taken up with streaming in the world, so we had to keep dialogue to a minimum at such times, and equally, if characters can speak more then they have to become more rounded and complex characters so they have something new to say."

The blame for the generally poor storytelling in games can't just be laid at the feet of technology, though. David Cage thinks gaming's reluctance to let go of tradition and convention is getting in the way, too, "I also see the limits of what can be done with the current paradigms. Technology gets more and more fantastic and you can do incredible things, but it's still the same games. I mean, how many monsters can you kill? How many zombies can you shoot?"

While we find ourselves baulking slightly at the implication that killing monsters and zombies might ever get boring, there's no denying Cage has a point. Developers do seem to have difficulty integrating decent stories into established game design templates. But then the mix between narrative and gameplay can get pretty lumpy even in the unconventional, story-centric games developed by Cage's own studio, which suggests existing game design formulas might not really be the problem. Sci-fi author and lead writer on *Crysis 2* Richard Morgan certainly doesn't think so, "There is absolutely no reason why you can't weld a really good narrative to a really cool shooting game. *Uncharted 2* is the perfect example."

Uncharted 2 is indeed a perfect, and unfortunately very rare, example of gameplay and storytelling woven together really, really well. But this seamless blend didn't come easily. Naughty Dog had to work *hard* to get it that smooth, as creative director Amy Hennig is always very keen to point out.

"We take a lot more time with it than other developers. It's so important to our game and our experience," she stresses. "We have an outline of the story, but we'll write scenes as we go. We then rehearse on the mo-cap stage, work out what >

CARMACK WAS RIGHT!

It IS like a porn movie...

HEAVY RAIN

IT'S MAYBE A bit more like a scene in a Hollywood movie where – as stated in clauses 8.7 and 8.9 of her contract – the female lead exposes her nipples for exactly 11 seconds than anything in a porn movie, but the scene where Madison and Ethan interact in a sexual manner is still blatantly sex for the viewer's, and not the characters', sake.

Today's Top Stories

The best storytelling on PlayStation

1 Half-Life 2
Superb characterisation and incredible attention to detail help make *Half-Life 2*'s story the very best a game has ever told.

2 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
Uncharted 2 is so well scripted, so well acted and so well directed that it's impossible not to get swept along by it.

3 Heavy Rain
Heavy Rain has some of the most well-crafted scenes of drama and, in Scott Shelby, probably the most complex lead character in a game.

4 BioShock
If you knew nothing about *BioShock* you'd still be told a rich story by the world of Rapture itself. That's its genius. And only a game could do it.

5 Shadow Of The Colossus
Unlike most Japanese game stories *Shadow Of The Colossus* is a very simple fable told with subtlety and style.

> props and sets we need, make all the pertinent changes to the script from working with the actors, and then the following day we run through the [revised] scene. We record all the dialogue on a big sound stage. The advantage of doing this is that any natural moment you have on stage, that you couldn't re-create in the studio, will happen now. Every unexpected reaction from the actors is there on screen. We get all the mo-cap back and the animators get to work. They do such an amazing job."

It really is a laborious, time-consuming process, so maybe the reason most storytelling in games is so weak is that developers can't be bothered to do a proper job of it. After all, it's only a game, right?

"Sometimes you write something and think, 'this is better than what you see in other games so that's good enough,'" admits gaming's leading comedy storyteller and *Brütal Legend* creator, Tim Schafer. "But then you turn on an episode of *The Simpsons* and think, 'okay, they're trying a lot harder and pushing it to be funnier.' So you go back and revise the script and really take the entertainment pace of it seriously and not get lazy because it's a game."

In 1993, storytelling didn't matter because your game only got compared to other games and it didn't matter in other games either. But in 2010 it's possible, with enough effort and dedicated resources, for videogames to stand up favourably against TV and movies in the storytelling stakes, and it's inevitable that such comparisons will and should be made. So it does matter. It matters as much as any other facet of your game,

"In the same way that there's, you know, good and bad AI, so there's good and bad fiction," attests Richard Morgan. "And no one would argue that, well, look, we're only shooting shit so we won't bother with complex AI. Well, no, because complex AI makes the game more kick-ass, so similarly, why should we bother with interesting characterisation?"

Sadly, we get the feeling that the response to this question in development studios all over the world is still, "We shouldn't." You don't bother with interesting characterisation in a porn movie, after all. Not even in *Operation Desert Stormy*, porn's answer to Best Picture Oscar winner, *The Hurt Locker*.

> *"Storytelling does matter. It matters as much as any other facet of a game"*

Yes, the John Carmack attitude to storytelling, narrative and characterisation in games is still prevalent some 17 years after *Doom* but it is slowly, surely on the way out. Developers (including id Software, even) are putting more effort into that side of their games and are finding smarter ways of using their stories to support gameplay and even ways of feeding them into marketing and publicity campaigns. However, for the vast majority of developers, even those who work hard at it, story still takes a back seat to gameplay and has to be geared towards it and fit in around it where necessary. The vast majority... but not all.

A few developers have started putting storytelling first and allowing narrative to determine and shape gameplay features once

Designers suggested adding story elements to *Doom*, but were told 'No!'

CARMACK WAS RIGHT!

It IS like a porn movie...

DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

THE FIRST PRESENTATION we ever saw of *Dragon Age: Origins*, back in February 2009, focused almost entirely on the idea that there was a female character who you could rescue and would then express her gratitude in a sexual manner. The final game wasn't *quite* this porny, but your interactions with others still felt like little more than a mechanical build-up towards some softcore nookie.

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The aftermath of the nuclear bombing in *Call Of Duty 4* is one of the most affecting and powerful moments in games.

the story is set. Most prominent of all these studios is undoubtedly Quantic Dream.

"I think that many games start with just providing adrenaline and say that that's enough," muses David Cage. "I think we are the very first ones trying really to take the story approach. People love stories, so let's tell a story. So that adults can find an interest again in interacting. *Heavy Rain* proves that there are ways of telling the story using gameplay."

> *"There is absolutely no reason why you can't weld a really good narrative to a really cool shooting game"*
> – *Richard Morgan, sci-fi author*

Opinion may be divided as to whether *Heavy Rain*'s 'Simon says' actions even constitute gameplay, and as to how effective a storytelling device they actually are, but there's no doubting it displays a bold and refreshing approach to game design and does represent a step forward for storytelling in games.

But leading with your story doesn't *have* to mean attempting to reinvent the way games are played. Kaos Studios' *Homefront* has, in gameplay terms, a fairly conventional first-person shooter at its foundation. But it uses FPS basics as a kind of blank slate to be filled in rather than as a template to be worked from.

"The story is really our laser focus on this game," explains lead level designer, Rex Dickson. "We're actually not even pushing anything as being a brand-new feature or brand-new mechanic. What we're really selling as our primary point is a unique core fantasy that you're not going to get anywhere else."

"And having that as a core is really nice because it frees you up as a designer to not have to exceed or compete in those ways," adds single-player lead designer, Chris Cross. "It's not just a mechanical competition. It's about execution and expression; less about bullet points. Our weapon list [for example] isn't driven by how many are in the game or by competing with somebody else. It's driven by what we need for the story, and what's going to help suspend the disbelief of the player."

Making narrative a top development priority will surely help ensure a high standard of storytelling in a game, but it's no guarantee of it. Ultimately, a game story still has to fundamentally be a good story if it's going to be worthwhile. So how do you write a good game story?

"Well, the first thing you do is you make it more complicated," asserts Richard Morgan. "You ensure that your characters have agendas which don't line up with the player's. So they're not necessarily >

The original *Half-Life* was the first FPS with a proper story.

6 Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

COD 4 tells personal war stories with surprising power and poignancy. And while frequently spectacular, it never forgets to take war seriously.

7 Brütal Legend

Underneath the heavy metal references and surreal humour, lies the touching story of a man who knows better than to play the hero, even when that's exactly what he is.

8 Killzone 2

Killzone 2 presents you with a clichéd band of macho space marines, before slowly dismantling their bravado as their purpose in life (and death) is eroded away.

9 Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

Vice City stands out because it does what it does faultlessly. It's got more memorable characters, lines and story moments than any other *GTA*.

10 Dragon Age: Origins

Despite its wooden cut-scenes, BioWare deserves credit for creating a world with depth and a story with a real sense of gravitas in *Dragon Age*.

The Dream Team

A good supporting cast is vital to a game's story, so here's our ultimate NPC supergroup...

Alyx Vance - Half-Life 2

She might not be the most iconic of game characters, but Alyx Vance is easily the most believable and most likeable on a personal level. We'd gladly repopulate the planet with her.

Captain John Price - Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

In *MW2*, Price is nonsense. But in Call Of Duty 4 he is no-nonsense, and that's what's so appealing about him. His grounded personality makes the whole experience feel much more real.

Roman Bellic - Grand Theft Auto IV

A lot of people find Roman annoying and, well, he is. But it's a natural kind of annoyingness accompanied by a charm that makes you love him and hate him at the same time. He's just like a real family member.

Chloe Frazer - Uncharted 2

Without Chloe *Uncharted 2*'s story wouldn't have the pull it does. It's not just the mysteries of Nepal, but the mysteries of Drake and Chloe's relationship that keep things interesting.

Corporal Rico Velasquez - Killzone 2

A lot of people hate Rico. This is mainly because his AI is pretty poor. But his flaws are what make him a perfect NPC, and the friction and dissent he causes are vital to the story.

The banter between the cousins Bellic is one of the *GTA IV* script's strongest elements.

> deliberately antagonistic to you, they're not necessarily on your side, they're just there, and they have their goals and sometimes those goals will line up with yours, sometimes they won't. It's a really basic technique, but it's one that seems to be sorely lacking in games for the most part."

The supporting cast does seem to be especially important in games. All games with genuinely good storytelling... well, *both* of them (*Uncharted 2* and *Half-Life 2*)... have a group of memorable companion characters who fulfil a vital role in giving the game's narrative context, meaning and purpose. Chris Cross notes that this is definitely something Kaos Studios has picked up on for *Homefront*'s NPCs, "Really they're sort of mirrors for the player to experience their own feelings through."

"It's almost... I don't want to go so far as to say it's more like a reality show, but that's what it is," Rex Dickson adds. "When you have a bunch of people working very closely under high stress situations it creates a lot of conflict and a lot of drama and that's naturally developed over the course of the time we've developed this game."

> *"We want you to be in every moment, playing the story rather than just being told the story"*
> *– Robert Bowling, Infinity Ward*

The most important character in any game story is, of course, the player, and getting his/her role and his/her perspective right is one of the trickiest challenges videogame storytellers have to face. These are *games* after all, so they're supposed to be *played* not spectated on. Developers pushing storytelling to the fore tread a very fine line, perpetually running the risk of giving their players too much to watch and not enough to *do*.

As much as everybody loves the cut-scenes in games such as *Uncharted 2*, *Grand Theft Auto IV* and even, if somewhat begrudgingly, *Metal Gear Solid 4*, storytelling that never interrupts gameplay and never pulls you out of your role has the advantage of being truly unique to games.

"We always focus on being very much fast-paced and never stopping so you can listen to the story," expounds Infinity Ward's creative strategist Robert Bowling. "We want you to be experiencing the story through the gameplay. We never take you out of the moment whether, you know, like in *Call Of Duty 4* where you're dying from radiation or in *Modern Warfare 2* where you're climbing up the mountain. We want you to be in every moment, playing the story rather than just being told the story. I think that's the difference in the way we make games. We're very cinematic, but one that you're very much in control of."

It's a philosophy that has served *Modern Warfare* very well, but one that was pioneered by a different series. Yes, we're back to *Half-Life* again, the series that showed all other developers how to tell stories in ways that are unique to games, only for most of them to take no notice, trying instead to transplant

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the sometimes ill-fitting conventions of movie storytelling into game design. But a few took note including, once again, the team behind *Homefront*.

"We looked at *Half-Life 2*," confirms Kaos's creative director Dave Votypka, "and it did such a great job of the in-game storytelling, which really nobody has done much of. We were really inspired by that, and we really love the immersion that it brings you, as opposed to constantly being stopped by cut-scenes or whatever."

"Yeah, that's the model," continues Danny Bilson, executive vice president at THQ and writer on *Homefront*. "There's no cut-scenes. It's all walk around, head tracking, people react to you. It's very influenced by one of our favourite... fiction delivery systems, if I can call it that, because it's more immersive."

So, unless your game is about a well-oiled muscular handyman who's just dropped by to fix the photocopier, the story in a game is *not* like the story in a porn movie (although we definitely wouldn't skip the cut-scenes in that particular action-adventure). Storytelling in games *is* important and – with the right techniques, philosophy and, most importantly, effort – it can be done as well as in other media. Potentially even better in some respects.

If games are ever to really make a mark on the world not just as a form of entertainment, but as a form of expression, maybe even art, then more developers need to start giving storytelling the attention and consideration it deserves. Calling your story a "unique, compelling, mature narrative" when it's actually nothing more than a bunch of shallow caricatures and trite clichés strung together by explosions, death and occasional boob isn't enough. We need stories and characters we can believe in and care about, that affect us in some lasting way. Storytelling is becoming the one factor that separates the good games from the great ones. As David Cage puts it, only a great game "can make you feel something or make you more clever, or even leave an imprint in you. So that when you turn off the console, there is still a part of the game in you. With games, you turn off the console and you go do something else. They don't leave an imprint. Very few games leave an imprint in you, so they don't change who you are, they don't change the way you see things."

> *"Storytelling is becoming the one factor that separates the good games from the great ones"*

Very few do. But *some* do, and if some do, then more can.

We're going to give the last word on this to Media Molecule's Kareem Ettouney. He's talking here about what he'd like to see come out of the *LittleBigPlanet 2* community, but also about the current state of game design and writing as a whole. Basically he's summing up what gaming, now more than ever before, really needs, "For me, personally I like personal and expressive stuff. I think it's lacking at the moment because of the amount of slickness that is around. There is no me and you and our problems and our things and our jokes – a bit of that is nice. I would love to see some of that."

The theory is this is more meaningful because it's an American car park, not a desert and some rocks somewhere.

Uncharted 3: Search For The MacGuffin

"I haven't thought that far ahead"

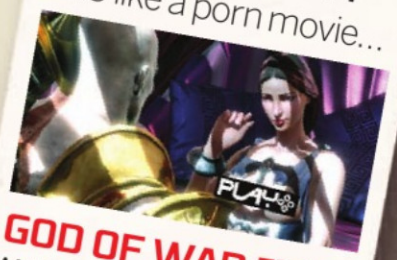
IF THERE'S ONE PlayStation story absolutely begging for another chapter, it's got to be *Uncharted*'s. What will happen next? Where will Drake go? What will he be looking for? Who'll betray him? Have they really betrayed him? Or are they protecting him? Or what? It's time we searched for some clues; maybe even a map...

The main thing this game that doesn't exist yet needs is a MacGuffin. No, we didn't know what that was until we looked it up either (thanks. Wikipedia). The MacGuffin is the thing in a story that provides the main motivation for the main characters' actions, at least at first. In *Uncharted* it's always the treasure.

So, what treasure is Drake going to be after this time? He's done jungle, he's done snow, he even went a bit urban at one point – surely that just leaves desert, and surely that means Egypt. So our money's on the Book Of Thoth being *Uncharted 3*'s MacGuffin.

CARMACK WAS RIGHT!

It IS like a porn movie...



GOD OF WAR III

A MAN WANDERS into a bed chamber where three beautiful lipstick lesbians are getting it on. One of them starts questioning his manhood and he is thus obliged to prove himself in a sexual manner. The other girls watch and are so turned on by what they see that they can't help but 'do' each other on the sidelines. It's 100 per cent porn scripting.

THE FUTURE OF PSN

The hottest indie games on our PSN wish list

WITH JOE DANGER and *Shatter* already on PlayStation Network, *Shank* to be published by EA soon and *Eufloria* on the way, it's clear that the Independent Games Festival held each year in San Francisco is the place to see the hottest downloadable games of the future. As such we thought we would reveal some of the amazing games that were present this year and assess our chances of seeing them on PSN.

THE FESTIVAL HEADLINERS

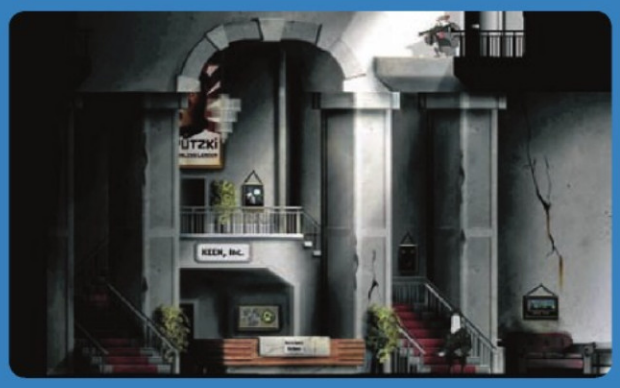
The cream of the IGF crop this year

MONACO

Developer: Pocketwatch Games
Description: Inspired by classic French heist movies, *Monaco* is a four-player co-op stealth game that was the overall festival winner this year, picking up a lot of buzz in the process. It's a top-down game where each player has a speciality and must escape various prisons and other high-security locations. It could be a big hit on PlayStation Network.

ROCKETBIRDS: REVOLUTION

Developer: Ratloop Asia
Description: Inspired by games such as *Flashback* and *Oddworld*, *Rocketbirds* is a 2D action adventure and shooter that sees you take a crack commando chicken up against the forces of Albatropolis. Mix in that amazing-sounding plot with some great artwork and this is a winner.



TRAUMA

Developer: Krystian Majewski
Description: A car-accident victim is playing through events from her past as she dreams in a hospital bed. Not your average videogame introduction, but it's safe to say that *Trauma* is not your average point-and-click adventure either. With Move on the horizon Krystian Majewski's game could be a very interesting and arty addition to PlayStation Network.

SUPER MEAT BOY!

Developer: Team Meat
Description: An insanely challenging platformer in the vein of such downloadable hits as *N+*, *Super Meat Boy!* is building up a lot of fans already with its meaty hero and cutesy art style. Team Meat's website says it's never coming to PlayStation 3, but in interviews the developer said it has it up and running already, so we're hoping the website has got it wrong.

PC FAVOURITES

Our pick of downloadable PC hits we'd like on PSN

SCARYGIRL

Developer: Nathan Jurevicius
Description: This Flash game has been available online for some time now, but its superb art style and clever adventure puzzles make it addictive as hell.

MACHINARIUM

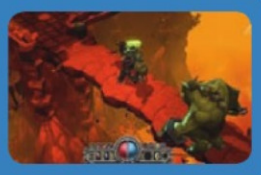
Developer: Amanita Design
Description: The geniuses behind *Samorost* actually managed to outdo themselves with *Machinarium*. It would be an honour to have it on PSN.

PLANTS VS ZOMBIES

Developer: PopCap Games
Description: There are few games from PopCap that we wouldn't want to see on PSN, but now we have *Peggle* this tower-defence hit is top of the list.

TORCHLIGHT

Developer: Runic Games
Description: This action RPG is making a lot of noise on PC and Mac at the minute with its superb art style and combat. What more could you ask for?



OSMOS

Developer: Hemisphere
Description: Large orbs absorb smaller orbs so you need to get your orb bigger while avoiding those that can absorb you. Sounds perfect for PSN to us.

WORLD OF GOO

Developer: 2D Boy
Description: We've mentioned *World Of Goo* in the mag before and still think it would be an essential addition to PSN after Move launches.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!! — A RECKLESS DISREGARD FOR GRAVITY

Developer: Dejobaan Games
Description: While its title may have been the first thing to catch most people's eyes, this base-jumping point scorer is like a mash-up of *Pilot Wings* and *Rez HD*. If that doesn't sound like genius to you then you're broken. Anyway, Dejobaan Games' *A Reckless Disregard For Gravity* is available online, but we would really love to see a PlayStation Network release for this one.

MIEGAKURE

Developer: Marc Ten Bosch
Description: *Miegakure* from developer Mark Ten Bosch works in four dimensions using our usual three of height, width and depth and mixing in the fourth dimension of a parallel existence that interacts and impacts our own. The result is a puzzle platformer of mind-bending cleverness that could really shake things up.

COGS

Developer: Lazy 8 Games
Description: Another game that might integrate well with PlayStation Move when it's launched, *Cogs* is a slider puzzle mixed with those pipe puzzles from the original *BioShock* and a little steampunk attitude. It's already on its way to the iPhone, but could also find a receptive audience for itself if it came to PlayStation Network as well.

VESSEL

Developer: Strange Loop Games
Description: Sporting some incredibly impressive water physics, *Vessel* is a 2D puzzle game from developer Strange Loop that offers lots of challenging levels where you need to manipulate bodies of water to win. You must lead a genius inventor around as he investigates machines of his that have come alive. Could be another big hit.

TRAILBLAZERS

The games that have already made the leap

SHATTER

Developer: Sidhe Interactive
Description: In a reversal of the usual trend *Shatter* picked up two nominations at this year's show, several months after being released on PSN. It got nods for its audio and picked up a nomination for the audience award. It didn't win either, but it's still excellent.

SHANK

Developer: Klei Entertainment
Description: Another star from this year's IGF with an Excellence in Visual Art nomination, EA made the smart move of snapping *Shank* up recently for release on PSN. It should be with us very soon (if it isn't out as you read this) and looks an absolute treat.

JOE DANGER

Developer: Hello Games
Description: Another recent release, *Joe Danger* wowed us when we saw it last year so it came as no surprise when it got Grand Prize and Technical Excellence nominations this year. It was a bit of a coup that Sony secured it for PSN so be sure to check it out.

BRAID

Developer: Number None/Hothead Games
Description: Jonathan Blow's excellent platformer picked up the big IGF prize in 2006 before a release on Live Arcade in 2008 and finally arrived on PSN last December. The awards haven't stopped rolling in since and that's no surprise.

CASTLE CRASHERS

Developer: The Behemoth
Description: As we write this we're still waiting on *Castle Crashers* to arrive on PSN, but it did manage to pick up a deserved nod for its visual style at IGF 2007. Since then it's continued to draw in fans and frankly we can't wait to see the super-duper improved version soon.

EUFLORIA

Developer: Omni Systems
Description: Previously known as *Dyson*, *Eufloria* was recently announced for PSN and is scheduled to hit the Store sometime in 2011. Its core concept is a kind of real-time-strategy game using trees growing on asteroids. Sounds mad we know, but it could be the next *Flower*.

5 DREAMCAST GAMES WE WANT ON PSN

SONIC ADVENTURE AND CRAZY TAXI CONFIRMED, BUT WHAT ELSE DO WE WANT?

2 JET SET RADIO

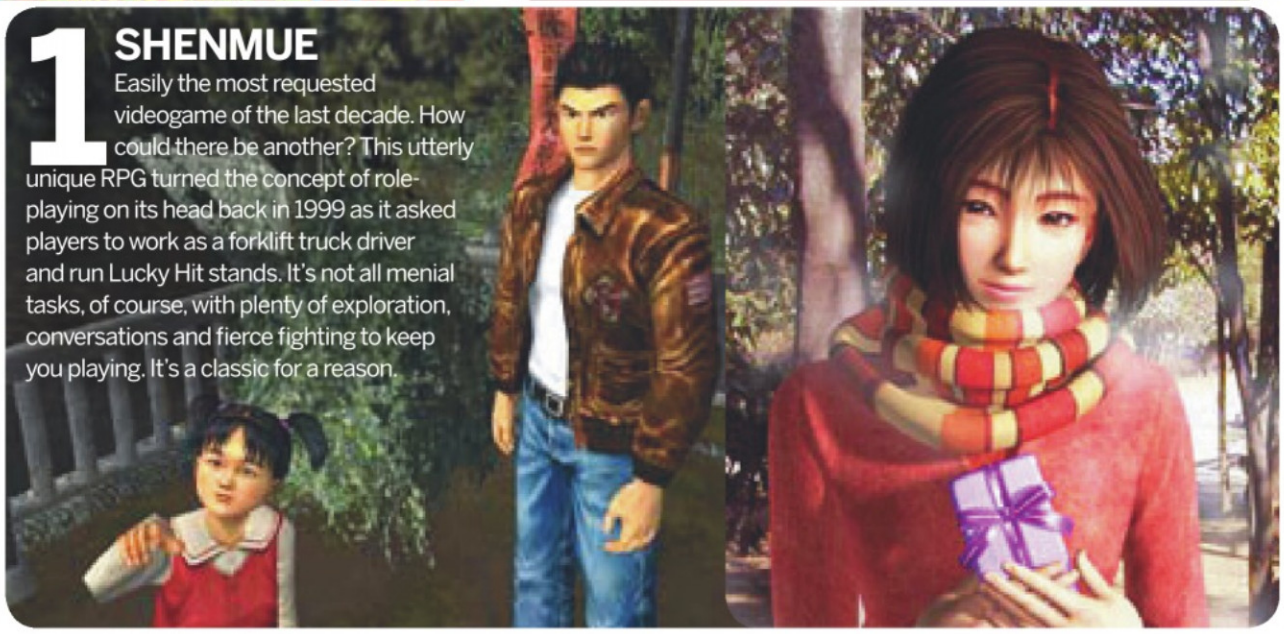
Ask anyone familiar with the Dreamcast era for any kind of gaming list and somehow they'll find a way to squeeze *Jet Set Radio* in there. The reason being that it's an incredibly addictive game, blending all the elements we love about old-school *Tony Hawk* games with wonderfully colourful Japanese visuals and brilliant gameplay. Surely an essential Dreamcast release.

4 POWER STONE

Power Stone is one of those great cult classics of the Dreamcast era that you may have heard about, except this one is actually very good. Like its Nintendo counterpart, it's all about fighting multiple enemies in a vertical as well as horizontal stage, using special moves and picking up weapons. Great fun for all.

3 FATAL FURY: MARK OF THE WOLVES

Originally released in Japanese arcades, *Mark Of The Wolves* was a real departure for the series containing hardly any of the cast from previous games. The new characters gave the game some fresh blood to work with and the end result was one of the best 2D fighters ever made. Plus, Live Arcade already has it. That's not fair.



1 SHENMUE

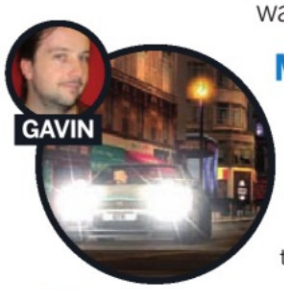
Easily the most requested videogame of the last decade. How could there be another? This utterly unique RPG turned the concept of role-playing on its head back in 1999 as it asked players to work as a forklift truck driver and run Lucky Hit stands. It's not all menial tasks, of course, with plenty of exploration, conversations and fierce fighting to keep you playing. It's a classic for a reason.

5 SKIES OF ARCADIA

A Japanese RPG with flying ships and floating islands in the sky you say? Sure, *Skies Of Arcadia* isn't the most original game in the world, but it remains one of the best examples of the genre around with colourful characters (in both the literal and metaphorical sense) that really make it something special. Throw in a superb soundtrack and fantastic world design and this is essential.

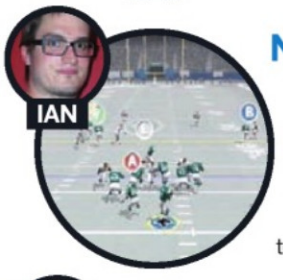
TEAM PICKS

The Dreamcast games the Play team want to see on PS3



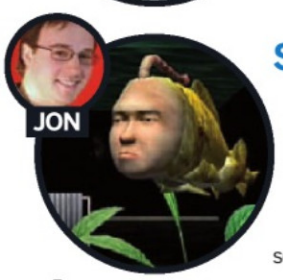
METROPOLIS STREET RACER

MSR was the first of a string of awesome street racing games from Bizarre Creations, the latest of which is *Blur*.



NFL 2K1

NFL 2K1 was a great game because I didn't need to know anything about gridiron to enjoy playing it. Plus it was of benefit that real 'football' fans seemed to like it.



SEAMAN

Games don't come much weirder than *Seaman*, but as virtual pet sims go this is one of the best and most original. Using a mic attachment it was very sophisticated for its day.

KISS PSYCHO CIRCUS

Let's get this straight, I'm not choosing this game because it was a gaming masterpiece but because it featured the greatest rock 'n' roll band of all time... Kiss.

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RE:PLAY

The **Play** letters page takes a serious turn but PlayStation games and stupid letters will keep us all smiling through anything

This month's letters answered by: **Gavin Mackenzie, Robert In Disguise**

Melroy D'Souza's letter about gamers maturing served as a reminder to me that I am the oldest member of the **Play** team. I thought Melroy's letter was going to be about games getting more 'mature' (ie having more boobs and swearing in them), but it turned out to be more interesting, to me at least. I don't have a wife or kids, but at 32 years of age, I am finding there are certain things I no longer have the energy or inclination to do any more. Like learning to play *Super Street Fighter IV* properly, for example.

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★STAR letter

You're Welcome

In the past few months I have become quite ill with a permanent disability, meaning I am always in severe pain and some days can't walk (before I was a competing mountain boarder and surfer), my wife has got pre-cancer cells needing immediate treatment and someone wrote my car (which I adored) off. So on the whole things were pretty rubbish.

However, a package came through the door the other day and I had won the *Half-Minute Hero* competition. Well, can I say after all I have been through recently this just absolutely made my day and brought a huge smile to my face. It meant more to me than you will know so I just wanted to write you a big thank you for bringing a bit of light into my world.
James Koppert, via email

This is the third sob story we've had recently. First there was the former drug addict who said that Play had helped him to recover, then there was the man with the mashed up hand, and now this...

I'm starting to wonder if some of you have figured out this is a way to get free stuff, but actually we do believe you James, which is why you're getting more free stuff on top of the free stuff you already got. All I can say is I hope more light shines into your world in future.

This T-shirt is guaranteed to make anyone happy. Especially if they get it free.

Political Games

Obama's attack on videogames has been featured in your magazine and I was wondering: does politics have a place in videogames? Many recent games have featured them. I recently played a bit of *GTA IV* just for fun and realised that there are touches on politics in it which make the story yet more interesting and fun. It seems that the game is partially a political commentary on America, most of which is rather amusing.

Also touching the political side of things is the upcoming *Medal Of Honor* game. This is an interesting title as it is based on a current conflict. Could the game be used to portray political messages? Or bring the political side to war into scope of videogames in general? People watch movies for pleasure and there are a great number of political movies. Also there are books which deal in this field of entertainment. Games have always had a serious side, Monopoly taught me what a mortgage was when I was young. I don't see why videogames can't have a serious side, too.

So where do you stand on videogames being used to portray themes and messages which enter the mainstream? Are games exclusively for fun or could interactive technologies be used in the same way as other forms of the media?
Josh Ferriday, Cottingley

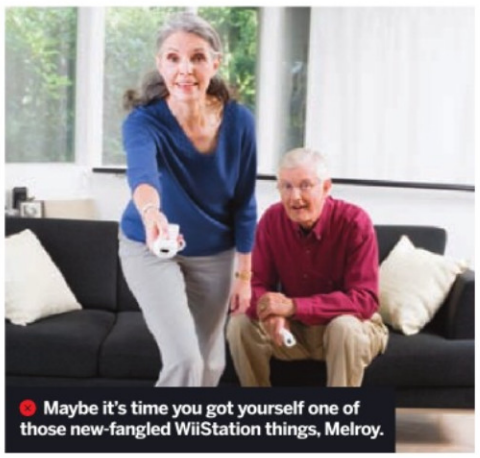
When politicians poke their ill-informed, agenda-driven noses into gaming it is generally unwelcome, but you're right that politics as a whole is much bigger than mere politicians and it does inevitably permeate all aspects of culture, including videogames.

EA has stated clearly that *Medal Of Honor* is about the personal stories of the soldiers on the ground and not about the politics of the war in Afghanistan, but is it really possible for a game set in a contemporary war *not* to have a political dimension to it? No, it's not. Even if it's not conscious or deliberate, there still has to be an ideology in there somewhere. Many gamers want politics to be kept out of games, and this is understandable. But the reality, one it's important to be aware of, is that they're in already and you cannot keep them out.

Hail To The Chimp is what happens when games try too hard to be political. Far, far too hard.

Grumpy Old Gamers

I wanted to write about how gamers seem to have matured over time. I started off at age three with an Atari and at that point I played any game just for the sake of bright colours and interactivity. But things got serious with the PSX. I literally used to play any and EVERY game that I could get my hands on (this at the age of eight). Along comes the PS2, and suddenly I can't afford to just about buy any game (responsibility and all that. Thanks Mum) and I'm starting to get a bit picky as well. By now (with the PS3 and in my twenties), I find myself struggling to find time to play a decent game. My game collection is in the mere twenties and I also find myself shifting to a more casual, quick-fire gaming session than the good ol' fashioned all-nighter of old. Is it me or does this happen to everyone?
Melroy D'Souza, Melbourne, Australia



Maybe it's time you got yourself one of those new-fangled WiiStation things, Melroy.

Almost everyone, Melroy, almost everyone, but there are exceptions. Retro Gamer editor and regular Play contributor Darran Jones for example is 36 years old and married with two

Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game, courtesy of Activision. For each letter we included this month, the sender wins a copy of Transformers: The War For Cybertron, which is out now on PS3 (£49.99).

STUPID letter

Dynasty Warriors 6 – The case against sequels.

Squeal For Sequels

When I heard the announcement that *Arkham Asylum 2* and *inFamous 2* were on the way to be released in the near future, it got me thinking about sequels to games that I would like to see. I would love to see sequels to such games as *Prototype*, *Far Cry 2* and *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*. I think all have a good chance of selling well if sequels are made. *Prototype*'s ending left it perfectly set up for a sequel. As for *Far Cry 2*, its ending of mystery has also perfectly set it up for a sequel. *Oblivion* I think will not have a direct sequel because everything was wrapped up but I do believe, however, that there will be another *Elder Scrolls* sequel which will not be a follow on from the story in *Oblivion*, it will most likely be set in the Summerset Isles. Those are only a few of many games that I would like to see sequels of. Do you think there will be sequels to any or all of these games? Also, what games do you think are deserving of sequels?
Conor Wickham, Duncormick

Yes, Conor, I think it highly likely that the three games you mention will get sequels, but I'm not sure that's necessarily a good thing. The games market is flooded with sequels, most of which aren't really an improvement on the game(s) that came before them. Sometimes the second or maybe third instalments of a series end up being the best, but after that you normally find the developer runs out of new ideas and a once-loved brand starts embarrassing itself. There are exceptions, of course, usually the sequels that leave a gap of several years, but generally we'd rather see more originality.

F.A.Q.

I have a suspicion that the PlayStation Move will wind up being another bit of tat, which will finish its life in some forgotten corner gathering dust.
Brian Farrelly, Dublin
As long as it's not the corner of a warehouse, Sony will be happy.

I'm sure other people have been as let down by the Go as I've been.
Joel Hasting, via email
I'm not sure anyone else has bought one.

Just writing in to ask your opinion on EA setting up shop in Galway by the end of the year.
Ryan Clarke, Dublin
EA is a very important addition to the thriving games industry in Ireland, to be sure.

GAVIN... YOUVE GOT TO LET IT GO MAN ABOUT THE SURNAME... I'M MARRIED...
Neil Dethridge, The Ridge of Deth
She only wants you for your awesome name...

It's been roughly half a year since *MW2* came out, and it's had SO much attention that it's getting annoying. Here's my thoughts on the game...
Jack Mowat, Muirend
No, you're right. It is getting annoying.

THIS MONTH, YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

- Say what you see! **58%**
- It's good, but it's not right **24%**
- What's Mr Chips doing? **10%**
- It's fast and furious in the Ready Money Round **8%**

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SUBJECT: PLAY MAGAZINE DISCUSSION

Topic: Oh no! I've gone and burned the issues!
I've never had a problem finding people to play with.
rbl007

SUBJECT: HEADLINES

Topic: New Xbox 360?
I don't see the point in getting one unless my Elite dies. Which it probably will.
Hazy89

SUBJECT: FIRST PLAY

Topic: Lets Talk About Roy Walker
My dad could have gone on *Catchphrase* years ago, but couldn't get out of work for the day.
the bossman

kids and a mortgage, but still finds more time to play games than anyone else on the planet. By contrast, Play's very own editor, Mr Hennessey Sir, is married and the only games he gets to play these days are Putting Up The Shelf, Cleaning Out The Gutters, Mowing The Lawn and Going Shopping. And he doesn't even have kids (yet)!

ModNation Lover

I just want to share my opinion and thoughts about the new action racing game I bought that came out last month, *ModNation Racers*!

I mean, okay, my friends at school say it looks like *LittleBigPlanet* with cars, and that's true, it does. But it's not just about the fact that it has karts, it has so much more than that.

The likes of the track creator, the character creator and the kart creator are the main roots of the game. This is what I loved about the game, having hundreds of options to customise your mods and sharing it online with thousands of players around the world, even race with your mods that you have made. Or even somebody else's, sometimes with enough effort and patience you can quite possibly build anything you imagine.

Overall I think this is a wonderful addition to the collection of exclusives PS3 has got going now, and I hope the community keeps on coming with more mods, tracks and karts. A fair 95% from me.
Sam Vernon, via email

Seems like you love *ModNation* even more than Play news editor Jon who, just a few months after finally moving out of his news cave has gone and burrowed his way into a *ModNation* cave. He's refusing to come out, and I don't really blame him. He's customised all the decor and furnishings and... well, it really is a palace, I must say.

ModNation Racers – was 90% too harsh?!

The BURNING issues

The stuff we want to hear about!

1. **Have you got problems in your life? Tell us about them and you might get a free game to cheer you up.**
2. **Which game character would you like to be the next Prime Minister of Great Britain?**
3. **Can you see yourself ever growing out of games? Or will you still be buying them with your pension?**

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LittleBigPlanet™ 2

Play gets exclusive behind the scenes access to Media Molecule for hands on time with LittleBigPlanet 2 and the exclusive reveal of many of the games newest features

Talk to anyone from Media Molecule for any length of time and a pattern will very soon emerge…

"How did you do that?"

"Whoa! I didn't even know you could do that!"

"We didn't even know we put that in there."

In the grand scheme of things, they don't actually know that much more about *LittleBigPlanet* than anyone else. It's a constant source of surprise, wonder, bewilderment and even fear for its own creators, more so than for anyone else. And that's just the first game.

Talk to them about *LittleBigPlanet 2* and they all seem, above all, excited. But there's a noticeable hint of anxiety and worry there, too. This is presumably what comes from creating something powerful over which you have little or no control. We'd imagine God feels much the same way.

Alex Evans isn't God, he's just the technical director at Media Molecule. We say 'just' because he's so modest about it himself.

"I'm just a graphics guy," he says, "so I'm a bad person to ask about game design."

By 'ask about game design' he means 'pray to for new tools in *LittleBigPlanet 2*'. For that, the man you want is creative director Mark Healey, who looks a bit like God, but also isn't.

"What Mark is good at," Alex tells us, "is that I can go to him and be like, 'I really want to be able to do a really high level feature, like I want to be able to do a racing game mode, or a top-down mode', for example, and Mark boils it down to the core feature. He's like, 'well what we'll do is we'll put a tweak in so you don't have to have gravity affecting some objects – now you can do top-down'.

"So he's really good at breaking it down – now you can do more than top down, as you can make any object move any way you want, and it's like, 'okay, now I see the power of that'. So it's really a question of – was it Ford who said, 'if you asked them what they wanted they'd have said a faster horse, I gave them a car?' The community are so genius about coming up with ideas that we hadn't even thought of, then what we're doing is channelling all of that and being like, 'right, ten people have asked for these things – they're actually all the same thing if we do it this way'. That's the spirit of *LBP 2*."

Indeed, while *LittleBigPlanet 2* might, at first glance, appear to be more complicated than its forebear by an order of magnitude, simplicity has been a guiding principle for the team throughout its development, as 20 lucky creators from the *LBP* community found out when they were invited to Media Molecule's studio for a 24-hour test run of the creation tools.

"A few of the creators were like 'oh, I don't know – it's quite scary'," Evans recalls. "But at the end of it they said, 'actually, it's brought the bar down' and that's the thing I've taken away from the whole day. They were like, 'things that used to be a right faff and did my head in, I can now do' – and that's the key thing I got from it. The top end is going to

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THAT'S USING YOUR HEAD

Make your own power-ups with the Creatinator

RATHER THAN CREATE a whole bunch of predetermined power-ups for you to choose from, Media Molecule has instead devised something called the Creatinator. This helmet-like device, which can be made to look like other things, can be programmed to throw anything you want it to. Seasoned *LBP* creators should think of it as a portable emitter that you carry around with you and trigger manually. Those of you less well versed in creative thinking should think of it as a device that can throw out rockets or fire or water or blocks or eggs filled with Sackbots. Basically it can produce anything you want it to, when you want it to. Pretty cool.

The Tower Of Woop level is grapple-tastic.

get higher, which is exciting for anyone who plays those levels, but it's actually the fact that stuff that wasn't that easy is now actually easy. There's less grind, less grunt work to it."

But *LittleBigPlanet 2* hasn't been easy for the team at Media Molecule. In pledging to ensure that every level from the first game be 100 per cent playable on the second, they have given themselves a hell of a task. The biggest problem is that a great many *LittleBigPlanet* levels – some of the best, most innovative ones, in fact – deliberately use specific bugs and glitches to produce effects that go way beyond the norm. So when it comes to quality assurance, the team has to be extremely careful what bugs get fixed and which don't, so as not to cripple existing levels. As Evans says – sweating slightly at the mere thought – it is...

LBP 2 HASN'T BEEN EASY FOR THE TEAM AT MEDIA MOLECULE

"Terrifying from a QA point of view, because it has to be backwards compatible so we have to check all of these levels. What I've said is – some people are like, 'why is he not polishing it 100 per cent?' – and it's like every level should load and run – I want every level to work, but there's a lot of levels out there and we're probably going to miss something."

And when he says 'miss something', he means fixing a bug that shouldn't be fixed, not the other way around. Media Molecule is a one-off studio in so many ways, including being the only developer that doesn't (necessarily) hate bugs in its games.

"I love them," grins Evans. "The more the merrier, but as long as it's not used for evil; as long as it's not grieving people or reducing the fun then I'm happy for people to find bugs. They're going to discover them anyway. I think one of the things we found in one of the early versions was stuff like, gluing things to spawn points which are a half layer thick and we didn't even know we put that in there. So, yeah, there's going to be things in there that we didn't even know about... exploits effectively.

"It's the sign of a good tool when it gets used in ways you wouldn't expect. If you watch someone use Photoshop or play the guitar no two people do it the same way – some people play guitar upside down, some people use Photoshop in the most ridiculous way. It's the same with *LBP*. We watched the creators come down to our office, and we had 20 pods set up, and they were working in teams, they were working on their own – I was watching one guy use vertex mode in the most awesomely fluid way. He was making these curves and I was like, 'whoa! I didn't even know you could do that!'"

Vertex mode? Vertex mode isn't something Media Molecule has formally presented yet. But that's the thing about *LBP 2* – there's so much in it, and it's all so intertwined, that major new features can't help but slip out of conversations with its makers. We don't really have any details of exactly what vertex mode entails, but our rudimentary knowledge of other design tools tells us that it's probably a means of generating scalable, curved shapes by setting points and determining the degree of curvature between them. It might sound quite technical and complicated but, assuming it is what we think it is, it'll definitely make things much, much easier as well as enhancing the creative possibilities of the game. Very much in 'the spirit of *LBP 2*' then.

Self expression is also very much in the spirit of *LittleBigPlanet*, and Media Molecule has come up with a cunning way of allowing players, not just creators, to express themselves in *LittleBigPlanet 2* – pins.

Mark Healey would really like to see more top-down racers like this.

Dressing up Sackbots like this makes them into instant NPCs.

"They're like a levelling up thing in the game now," Evans explains. "And there are hundreds of pins you can be awarded. For every Trophy there is a pin, but then there's loads more, so they're kind of an internal *LBP* Trophy.

"You can choose three pins that you have been awarded to put as badges on your avatar that show up on all of the level listings, your profile page. You can customise your earth now so when you go and see a level by a user, not only does it show you their level but it also streams in their earth, all their content and their three pins. So in a way it's like advertising yourself as a player, as a creator. So you can have pins that show that you've finished the single-player mode or that 5,000 people have visited my levels."

This is one of many ways Media Molecule hopes to make it less likely that creators will spend weeks on a project, only for it to be totally overlooked, and to make it easier for players to find creations that are not only good, but actually suit their own personal tastes.

"Exactly," affirms Evans. "And it means that at a glance, you can look at someone and say, 'that guy's got good taste'. You could have something like, for example... I've actually lost track of all the pins we have, but we track data like how many people have played levels via my 'hearted' list, so it's like, have you got the taste, or how many times have you played a level that's become the coolest level? Stuff like that, so different ways that you put yourself out there. Now you can follow people as well. We call it the stream and in your stream you could say, 'well that guy has good taste' so I'll follow him' and this will ensure your stream is good."

YOU'LL NEVER NEED TO BUY ANOTHER GAME

Your stream is much like a Facebook news page or Twitter feed, but instead of giving you up-to-the-minute news on the mundane details of other people's lives, it tells you what selected *LittleBigPlanet* community members are making and playing, and what they think about it. It will also be updated with news direct from Media Molecule, keeping you informed of the latest DLC, patches and other topics of interest.

You can do so much with *LittleBigPlanet 2* that the easiest way to define its limits is to discuss what you can't do. So we put it to Alex Evans that we thought there was no way to do an MMO, that is until we thought a bit harder and wondered if you could do a turn-based one.

"Ah yeah, that's cool," says Evans, who immediately seems to start figuring out how to do it in his head. "I think that's something

Classic puzzle games are just as possible as platformers now.

SACKBOY LIKES NETWORKING

Media Molecule reveals its new-look website and functionality

AS WE WRITE this the new-look *LBP* website is currently unavailable sporting only a LOLcat denying you access, but once it's up and running you should find it a much more rewarding place to spend time. We've mentioned before that you'll be able to search the new website for levels and queue them for download on your PS3 automatically, but now we've been able to see a little better how it will all work.

The site will look like the in-game stream with updates on your friends' activities and news from Media Molecule presented in a Facebook style. All your profile info, such as your avatar, will be viewable and you can use the same narrowed search parameters to find the kinds of levels you want to play.

The whole experience is more integrated into the game and easier to navigate meaning you can access *LBP 2* no matter how far away you are from your PS3.

The grappling hook is good for climbing, but better for falling.

Dave Inchi will guide you through the early levels.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO PLAYING HUNDREDS OF GAMES CREATED BY THE LBP COMMUNITY

we could actually do, but turn based, I would love to do something like that in the game. I am planning on building an RPG with it. [But] I mean the main thing there is the four-player limit in the game so no, not true MMO."

And we thought first-person games would be an impossibility, too, but then Evans showed us a level that had Sackboy flying down a 3D tunnel shooting at enemies using a crosshair. Not quite an FPS, but seemingly only a step or two away.

"The way that was built is, of course, it's still a 2.5D game," Evans explains while we pretend we'd already figured all this out. "So the creator built it as a top-down game, but you can now attach movies to objects then with electronics, you can control how the movie moves. He actually built a screen. He actually built all the lines and wires and effecters, moving cursors and enemies flat. If you go into Create mode and look at it side-on, it's actually flat!"

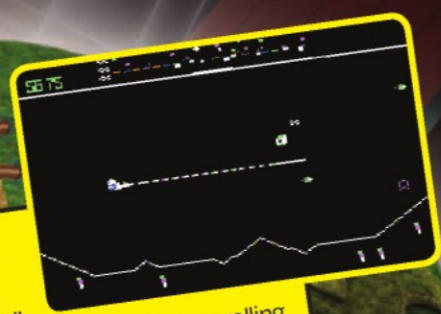
So Evans then proceeded to prove his point by showing us what it looked like behind the scenes. Through Create mode we could see all the connecting threads and behaviour chips that dictated the way that the 'background' was spawning objects that fell away beneath you to create the illusion of a 3D level. It was quite ingenious. So ingenious that Evans got a bit lost looking at it himself and started commenting on how certain timers had been linked together.

We don't know about you, but we're reaching the point where we don't entirely understand what we're hearing any more. You can create controllable movies and use them as elements within other levels? Er... yep... here's that *LBP* headache again. Still, it's not just us mere mortals who find it all too much for our tiny little brains sometimes. Alex Evans still has difficulty getting his head around his own game.

"So the really insane thing is that there's a new material called holographic material and one of the creators managed to make health packs in a level they built, which was like a helicopter gunship type level," he told us with an excited but scared look on his face. "The

MARK HEALEY'S LEVEL CHALLENGE

Speaking to *LBP 2*'s creative director, he suggested some game's he'd like to see the community make with the sequel

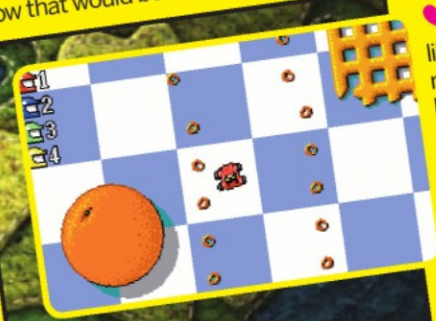


1 "I want to see a really, really good shooter, like a *Defender*-type game with multiple power-ups and things."

Defender was released in 1980 and was a side-scrolling shooter that also involved rescuing people before they got abducted by aliens and transformed into more enemies. We can see how that would be cool in *LBP 2*.

2 "I suppose the gauntlet to really throw down is for someone to make an FPS. It isn't geared towards making that, but there are tricks and smoke and mirrors and you could do something quite funky."

As Media Molecule's rail shooter has proven, faking a 3D view, albeit in a simplified form, is totally possible. Think *Wolfenstein* or *Doom*.



3 "I was always a big fan of top-down racing car games like *Micro Machines*, with really skiddy corners, so I'd love to see one of those."

We are also huge fans of the *Micro Machines* series and would dearly love to see a remake on PSN one day, but an *LBP 2* homage would be equally welcome. And yes, it's all about those skiddy corners.

4 "I'd love to see someone make an interactive film. I think that would be cool and that's all possible."

Heavy Rain in *LBP 2*? Apparently it could be done. Using chips with programmed responses to different conditions you could actually create a movie that responded to your actions. The implications of that for other game types are, of course, huge.

5 "Another mad thing for somebody to make would be a game that has its own Create mode in it. One of the testers managed to make their own Pop-It inventory so you're playing a level and you press ⓞ and their own thing popped up all made from holographic material and you could choose objects and place them in the world. That would be quite funny if somebody makes 'Little LittleBigPlanet'."

www.imagineshop.co.uk

This Rocket Tag game makes use of the Creatinator hat and low gravity.

Competitive scoring turns co-op gaming on its head in *LBP 2*.

Microchips turn once-static levels into living worlds of wonder.

health packs had these little rotating 'H' symbols that seemed to rotate in 3D, which you can't actually do. And I was like, 'how did you do that?' They said they wired it up as an LED display and built a grid of six-by-six blocks of holographic material which you can switch on and off using electronics that they used to animate the rotating H."

We've completely lost him now, but it's comforting to know that even he doesn't seem entirely sure what exactly it is he's describing and more than that, it's exciting to know that there are people figuring this stuff out so that the rest of us don't have to. If we want, we can just smile, relax and look forward to playing hundreds, maybe thousands or even millions of games created by the *LBP* community's legions of miracle-workers. We might not need any other game ever again.

IT BEGS THE QUESTION, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN'T DO IN LBP 2?

Having broken Alex Evans we caught up later with creative director Mark Healey and he agreed that other games will probably become obsolete after November. "Honestly, I wish I could fast-forward time – even though there's never enough time – and go about a month or two into the community land having this, because you'll never need to buy another game," he joked. The scope of the tools being made available to you in *LittleBigPlanet 2* is just so versatile that it allows for a wide array of game types. It begged the question again of whether there is anything that you can't do in *LBP 2*?

"I think you might struggle if you wanted to take over the world or cure cancer, but in terms of gaming I think the community are going to be the real proof of that," Healey explained. "I've been sitting back and thinking that any game I would ever want to make, I'm thinking of ways I could do it with this tool, which is really great. I'm almost tempted to quit my job actually, after this and just sit at home making games on my own with it. That's how good I think it is."

It's testament to this point that throughout our time with Media Molecule for every feature or gameplay mechanic that was mentioned we seemed to be able to think of a brand-new game we'd like to make that incorporated each one. That for Healey is kind of the whole point and as Evans suggested earlier he has a knack for boiling ideas down to their base level to actually give you something more than you asked for or needed.

"Our community guys here filter down the main things that people are really desperate for and really want and let us know about those and that will influence those or we'll just directly put them in," Healey explained. "In other cases it's more about looking at what they are creating or trying to create and rather than making a feature that directly addresses that particular example it's more like, 'oh, here's an idea that will solve a *lot* of problems and also solve that one problem."

When pressed Healey said the best example of this was the device previously known as the Direct Control Seat. "I think the Controlinator, which is my personal favourite feature, was a direct result of seeing particular levels within the community," he said. "There was a guy who did a kind of 2D-shooter-type game, which was actually an homage to a classic arcade game and seeing people do that kind of thing was really cool and it's amazing that they managed to make those. But to play it as a level on its own without knowing what went in to making it, you might think it was a bit rubbish. It doesn't

INSPIRED BY LBP 2

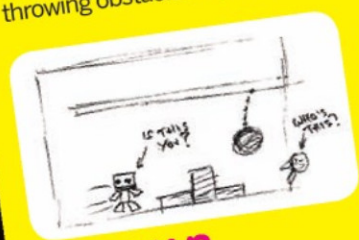
The games we thought of just talking to Media Molecule

FEEL THE EFFECT

A two-player platformer that takes advantage of the new divergent camera. The level will be two interconnecting worlds with triggers and levers that set things off in your rival's world. Likewise your opponent will be triggering events in your game, throwing obstacles in your way.

LITTLE MASS PLANET

Thanks to holographic materials and programmable chips a conversation system in which you talk with other characters (in text) and get to choose a response is possible. These responses then spawn further conversation. From there you could make an RPG-style game.



WHO AM I?

Hiding Sackboy behind some scenery, a Sackbot would be programmed to mimic your actions so it would seem you were controlling him, only for a spooky, 'OMG it's come to life', reveal. You would need to dress up the Sackbot to look like a Sackboy, but that's easy.

ROBOT CLASH

Big robots punching one another. That's what we enjoy and *LBP 2* can deliver it. Creating robots is no problem and even programming a Controlinator to map to button controls on your pad is no big deal. Creating a health bar with holographic material may be tricky.

Sackboy can now be made from liquids.

actually play that well and you had to be in the club already to know how cool that really was. With what we've done now you'll be able to make games that are really great to play and people won't care how they were made, they'll just think this is an awesome game. Obviously people can still make bad games, too [laughs]."

And it looks as if finding those great levels and even finding very specific things will be easier. We've already mentioned the feed that will update you on content being added, but refined searches where you can add multiple keywords to narrow your search should help. So will the fact that creators, not reviewers, will be choosing the words to associate with their levels. Users will be asked to simply provide a smiley or sad face and then if you want to you can write a full review of the level or game you've played. These reviews can then also be rated by other users. Being a good 'sharer' by hearting levels and writing reviews will also earn you pins and Trophies meaning there's another way to be involved in the *LBP* community without having to be a talented creator.

"It's hard with anything to have a front page and even Apple's App Store suffers from the same problems," said Healey. "I think what the guys have done should solve a lot of that. Now that there's going to be so many different types of games for you to choose from it will be quite easy to go online and say, 'I want to play a shooty game with rabbits' and you should get a nice selection come up."

But Healey is also hoping to see the community become closer and even more open than it has ever been. One of the most wonderful things we started to see more and more often in *LBP* was creators giving away some of their great vehicles or creatures as prizes within their games. Media Molecule is looking for the electronics and AI experts who emerge through the game to share their creations so that people can begin to specialise their creation skills. The ability to add Post-It notes to your creations so others know how to use them is one way of encouraging this.

"With the first game we always hoped that there would be a sort of marketplace where people were giving away cool little toys and there was an element of that," Healey admitted. "Hopefully that's going to be much better with *LBP 2*, because with the microchips you can make things much more contained. People will be able to say, 'here's my mega boss to put into your level and here's the input of how aggressive it is, this is how many bullets it will fire', and that's all totally doable. Maybe people will be able to make a whole game just by piecing together other people's bits and bobs."

THE COMMUNITY SHOULD BECOME EVEN MORE OPEN

There doesn't seem much doubt that this will be achieved given the atmosphere that surrounds *LittleBigPlanet* these days. While at first some people may not have understood the game Media Molecule was making or misinterpreted its intentions, there is now not only acceptance and understanding, but gamers and other games companies have taken *LBP* to their hearts.

"Interestingly where the community has sort of gone close to the bone in terms of copyright and stuff, quite often the owner of that IP has thought it was actually really cool and wanted to get involved in some ways," Healey revealed to us. "There just seems to be a cool vibe about the whole thing and most people are interested in getting involved in some way rather than attacking it. I don't know why that's happened. We're just lucky I suppose."

Of course, it's as much about making and sharing together in *LBP 2* as it is about playing

Creativity is being sucked out of *LBP* and you must save it here.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

The Sackboy outfits in *LBP 2* are more outrageous than ever before.

It's hard to believe, but *LBP* is more colourful than ever.

together, too. Co-op was in plenty of levels in the original game with some paths requiring more than one player, but now Media Molecule is getting competitive. You can now choose competitive scoring systems for your game meaning that rather than the usual collective scoreboard you'll get something much more tailored to your requirements. Once again it's all about what you want to make and what you want to reward in your game.

"Now playing online – and this may sound rather techy and boring – you can have divergent cameras, which means people playing on different machines can be looking at different parts of the world," Healey told us and went on to give some examples of what he meant. "So, you could do a massive, sprawling arena and create horrendous machines that you go and search out your enemy with, for example. Or sports games or racing car games. It opens it up to all that really.

The simple reason behind all this is that Media Molecule has recognised like so many others that playing together and competing, albeit in a friendly way, is an even bigger part of our gaming lives than ever before and to be a true platform for games *LBP 2* has to accommodate that.

"I think a lot of online games that are successful now are based around competing against other people online. It's going to be interesting to see the kind of iterations of existing games that get made in *LBP* based on popular, current multiplayer trends."

LITTLEBIGPLANET 2 IS ON A SCALE THAT IS HARD TO DESCRIBE, YET IT ISN'T INTIMIDATING TO USE

We had the chance to play some of the modes you may have seen at E3 such as a Rocket Tag game, a bumper car arena battle and a naughts and crosses challenge of hitting the DualShock buttons in sequence. Healey also showed us a cool little basketball-inspired game with a hoop and jump pads for scoring points. This involved yet another new power-up tool called the Power Glove, which allows Sackboy to lift objects and carry them around rather than just push or drag them as he did before. It's another simple new tool that has huge gameplay implications when you start thinking about ways it could be incorporated into delivery games and so on.

It was at this point that, as had happened with Alex Evans, we began to lose Mark Healey in musings as to what could be achieved with such deviously simple new mechanics. "You could even make a platformer where other players are the enemies and you just invite people in to try to block you," he said. "I wonder if you could do an online, multiplayer interactive film where you all play different actors or something?"

It was at this point we thought it best to make a dash for the exit before we managed to break any more Media Molecule employees, but we left with our heads buzzing. *LittleBigPlanet 2* is on a scale that's hard to describe and yet it's been made in such a way that it isn't intimidating or scary to think about using. This is so much more than we could have imagined. The final proof, like the last game, will be when *LBP 2* gets into the hands of players, but we find it hard to believe it could be anything less than a monster success second time around.

The platforming mechanics feel much less twitchy than before.

This bumper car game is simple, but really good fun all the same.

PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation

MASSIVE PREVIEW SPECIAL

Every genre. Every game

- Shooters
- Fighting
- Action
- Music
- RPG
- PSN
- Racing
- Move
- Sports

Play developer Q&A

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Call Of Duty: Black Ops

Treyarch's Mark Lamia talks studies, operations and shooting stuff

PS3

What was so appealing to you about black ops?
Nothing they did could be known about, so for us it was just this totally fertile ground. And creating something in this era, doing *Call Of Duty: Black Ops*, it was a totally ownable space for us to create this game. It was all inspired by what could have happened, or what did happen, or what we didn't know about what happened. What people think they know about this period is definitely not everything, and is probably wrong.

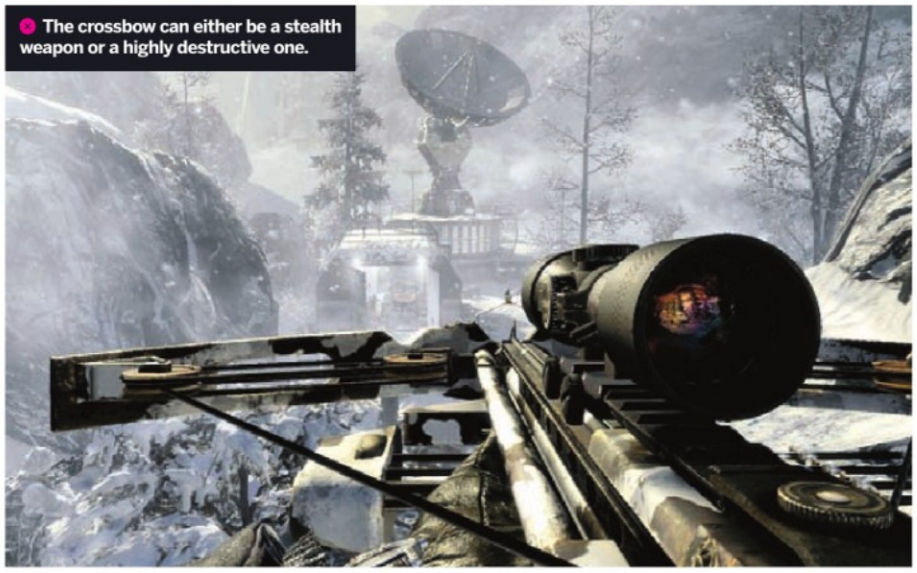
And you also met with some former Studies and Operations Group members. Did they make it sound like suitable territory for a game?
What they told us is that they would literally go into the armoury and then pick what they wanted, much like we would do... it's anything but a videogame, but as soon as they start talking about that stuff, you can imagine as game makers we're like, 'wow, that's the kind of thing that we like to do before we think about our levels.' We like to think about what weapons we want for this level and everything else.

Could they really do some of the stuff in the game like overruling officer's orders and commandeering vehicles?
That kind of was inspired by... literally, if you needed to, you could commandeer a general's jeep. You could really stop him at a road and take the jeep. They had identification so people would know they were SOG, and even a general would have to obey that.

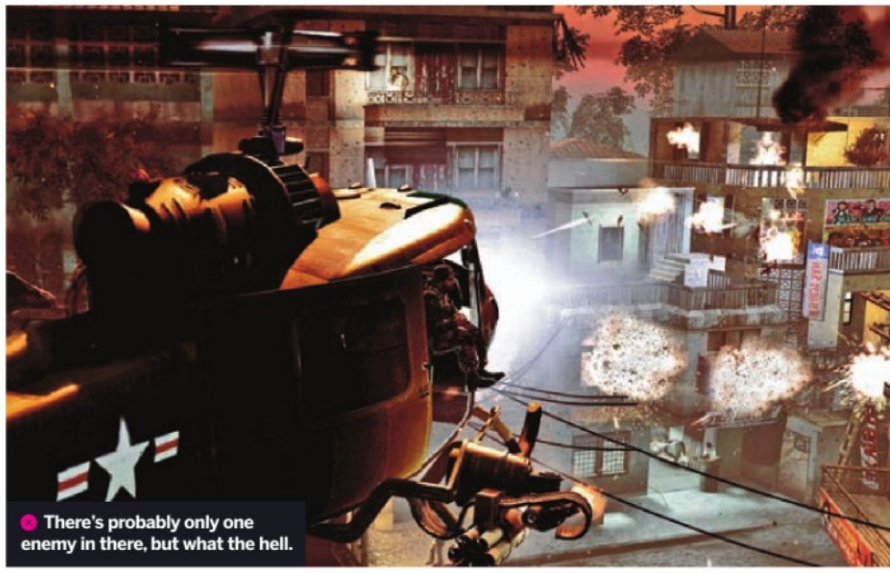
And do you have reason to believe that SOGs might actually have been operating behind Soviet lines during 1968?
Clearly that would be a black operation if that actually occurred. And you don't actually know that it

Fire! Beards! Tattoos! Guns! Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!

Seems a bit unfair that the guy in the leafy hat only has a pretend gun.



The crossbow can either be a stealth weapon or a highly destructive one.



There's probably only one enemy in there, but what the hell.

did or did not occur because, well, that's classified.

Did you meet with any 'enemies' as well?
On the other side, we met with some Soviet Spetsnaz. They came from a completely different perspective during that whole Cold War era. They talked about their training – you never knew there were so many different uses for a shovel. Everything from a culinary piece to cook your food to the most lethal weapon you could imagine to what it was actually intended for. There was something like a hundred different ways to use just a shovel.

1968 is an important period for our story – there is a large portion of the game that does thread through that

The only levels you've shown us so far have taken place in 1968. Will the game cover a broader period of time than that?
1968 is an important period for our story – there is a large portion of the game that does thread through that. However, I can tell you that the game does span a larger portion of time. It's not just about one location and it's not about one year, it is about a larger period of time. I don't want to share with you the entire timeframe because it's actually part of the *Black Ops* storyline.

Oh, go on...
Our trailer gives you some info to piece together on how we might tell a larger period of time story. When you dissect it, it shows quite a few images. It may flash quickly, but when you slow it down, there's quite a bit there.

Call Of Duty: Black Ops is being developed by Treyarch. Check the website for more details: **www.treyarch.com**

SHAGGY SOG STORIES

What is your major malfunction?

TREYARCH TOLD US that meeting former SOG operatives was a real eye-opener and that, while none of the in-game missions are based specifically on any real-life SOG stories, they certainly got *a lot* of inspiration. Apparently some of the stories the SOGs told were so out there that if they'd been put into the game, you'd have found them too implausible. As Mark Lamia puts it:

"You had to be... I mean, there's definitely... you had to be partially... crazy to do this kind of thing. They were amazing, but at the same time they had to just, y'know..."

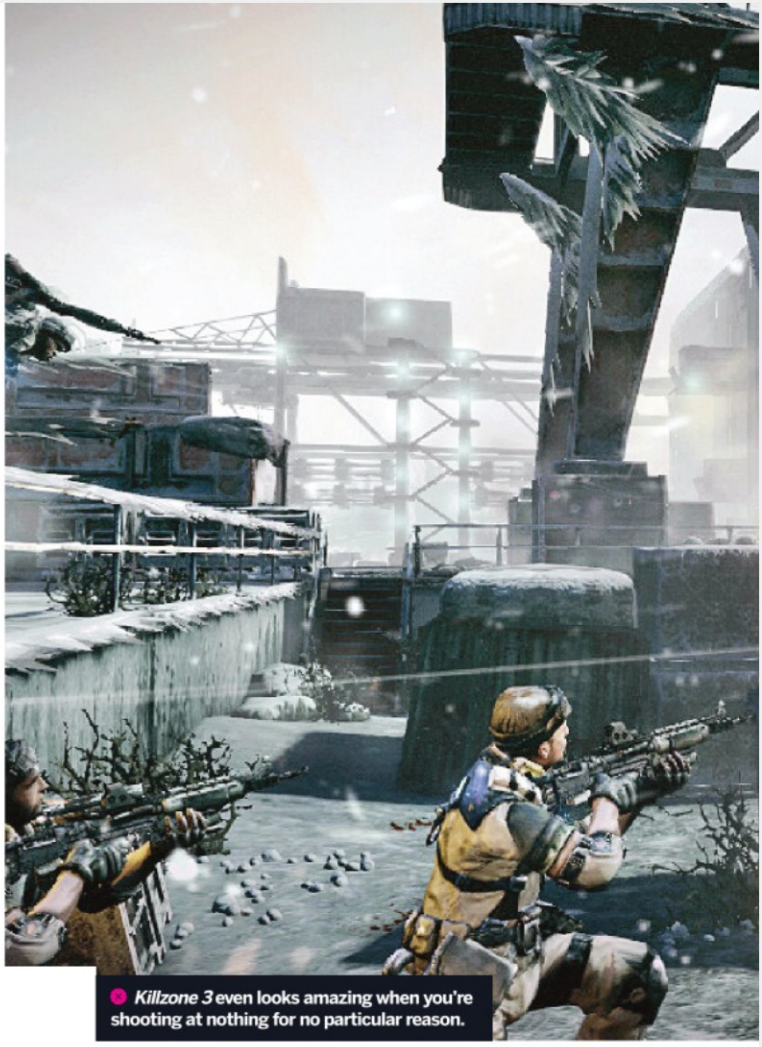
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- The story takes in a wide variety of locations and types of warfare.
- The player characters now talk, and say lots of insightful things.
- Based (loosely) on the activities of some very adventurous soldiers.
- The real reason that *Black Ops* is so great is classified. Sorry.

READ ME

Black Ops consultant Sonny Puzikas represented Spetsnaz in the TV show *Deadliest Warrior*, beating both the Green Berets and the IRA.

Yeah, the Helghast have jetpacks, too.



Killzone 3 even looks amazing when you're shooting at nothing for no particular reason.

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2011

Killzone 3

3D FPS game villains

PS3

In some ways Guerrilla Games had it easy with *Killzone 2*. To succeed, all it had to do was make the game that the first *Killzone* had tried to be, but had stumbled due to the PS2's technical constraints. And that's what *Killzone 2* was, as well as being the game that proved the PS3 really was, and still is, the most powerful gaming platform available.

But for *Killzone 3* to take the series to the next level... hmmm... not quite so straightforward. There isn't a completely new hardware platform to work with so areas for improvement won't be served up on a development plate, but there is a new hardware feature that's just waiting for something to come along and say, "Hey, everybody, this isn't just an expensive gimmick – it's the future." We are, of course, referring to 3D.

Now, 3D has been getting hailed as the next big thing in the world of entertainment since about 1890, but having now experienced *Killzone 3* in the latest and most advanced form of the technology, we're extremely tempted to say that this time 3D really means it. The entire population of the developed world might be wearing these stupid glasses all the time ten years from now.

This isn't like old 3D where you have to concentrate really hard not to go cross-eyed and the only effect you really get is that the foreground looks like it's in front of the background. No. Each individual bullet is 3D in *Killzone 3* and the effect is rather disconcerting at first, then terrifying, then exhilarating. It's honestly amazing – our only concern is how much of it we could handle in a single sitting. We felt a little bit wobbly after just ten minutes.

But there are reasons to get excited about *Killzone 3* even for those of us not quite ready to join the 3D revolution just yet. It's generally a slightly smoother, nicer looking game, even than *Killzone 2*, and it's got a jetpack in it. The jetpack, like the 3Dness, is not just a gimmick. It's a key feature that genuinely adds a new dimension to *Killzone*'s gameplay.

On the sections we tried it out on – both of which were icy and therefore did not use a gloomy black and orange palette – the jetpack made *Killzone 3* feel almost like a platform game. Don't freak out, it's still all about the ultra-violence at its core, but it felt like platforming because the jetpack allows you to perform very big jumps as opposed to free flight. The timing of your jumps and aiming of your landings won't affect whether you land on the desired platform and collect the coin/ring/apple, but it will affect how well you flank the enemy and give them a face mask full of shoulder-mounted cannon fire. Oh yes, *Killzone* still lives up to its name.

> There are reasons to get excited about Killzone 3 even for those of us not quite ready to join the 3D revolution just yet

Killzone 3 is being developed by Guerrilla Games. Check the website for more details: **www.guerrilla-games.com.**

RICO RETURNS

The ISA ya love to hate

RICO VELASQUEZ HAS rapidly become one of the most hated characters in all gaming, and he's back again in *Killzone 3*. Many fans are already hoping Guerrilla is only bringing him back to kill him off, but we think that's harsh. He's not as much of a cliché as many people seem to think and the flaws in his personality actually give the story a tension it wouldn't otherwise have. His AI is badly in need of fixing, though, we'll grant you that.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- 3D that's so convincing it'll make you duck for cover.
- The jetpack is loads of fun and useful for flanking.
- It's not all black and orange this time, we witnessed icy levels, too.
- Controls a little quicker and smoother than before.

READ ME

Follow-up to what currently stands as the best-looking game in the world, and one of the finest shooters on the PS3 to boot.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

The Helghast are too Gothic to wear proper snow camouflage.

This massive new gun makes mincemeat out of those pesky Higs.

We didn't see much of the agility these soldiers are capable of, but they can apparently leap like salmon.

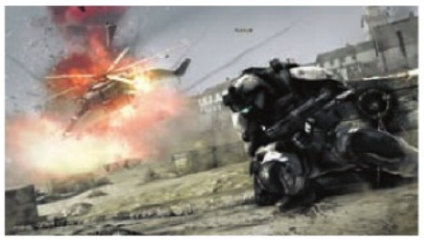
RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2011

Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

Visions of 2020

PS3

We had a chance to see what the stealthier side of *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier* is and amazingly, given that it's not set *that* far in the future, you can actually turn yourself invisible. How? Nanobots, that's how. But you do have to move slowly or else the nanobots can't keep up and they 'glitch', revealing your position. Fortunately, nothing's invisible to you thanks to an ultra-detailed HUD that will give you information and data on anything you look at.



We won't have to wait until 2020 for four-player campaign co-op in a *Ghost Recon* game, though, just 'til 2011. Oh yes, the entire *Future Solider* campaign is playable with four players, but you can also play with super-smart AI team-mates as well, if you prefer.

The Line is set in Dubai, a city built on a different kind of boom to this one.

RELEASE DATE: TBA 2011

Spec Ops: The Line

Guns and ammo

PS3

We've not seen anything much new of *The Line*'s sand mechanics since our last preview – we saw something *else* supporting a large quantity of sand get shot so that the sand buried enemies alive – but we have learned a little about Yager's approach to storytelling. There will be choices that have a knock-on effect on how the narrative develops later, but they won't be flagged up as 'options that will alter the story'. You might not even know you're shaping the plot because it's affected by choices you

make on the fly and by how successfully you pull off what you're trying to do. Let's hope this means there's not a 'goody' ending and a 'baddy' ending, and let's also hope Yager thinks of something better to do with sand than dumping it on enemies.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Vanquish

Japan's top developer takes cover

PS3

It wasn't so long ago that the best answer Japan had for *Gears Of War* was the decidedly unconvincing Tecmo Koei effort *Quantum*. Now, no offence to Tecmo Koei, but it's something of a relief that something else has come out of Japan, taken the now familiar cover shooter formula and, rather than getting it all confused with towers and unnecessary boobs, made it so much cooler and seemingly so much better.

Gears Of War is a great series – we're not going to slag it off just because we're a PlayStation mag – but there are a couple of things about it that we just don't like. First there's that awful character design. We didn't mind the super-chunky space-warrior thing when it was in *Unreal* and you didn't have to be looking at your own character all the time. But seeing a whole squad of these freaks waddling along like they're made from balloons filled with gravel is just embarrassing. And they control a bit like that sometimes, too.

Vanquish introduces a cool-looking character, slick controls and a massive injection of pace and fluidity into the formula, resulting in a game that... well, we should probably stop comparing to *Gears Of War* from now on, really. *Vanquish* is already making that hoary old veteran look a tad dated.

Platinum Games is developing **Vanquish**. Check the website for more details: **www.platinumgames.com**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's incredibly fast and will really keep you on your toes.
- It's by the people who made *Bayonetta* so, yeah, that.
- Very similar to *Gears Of War*, but not all fat and clunky.
- Huge, fun boss battles just like the biggest and best games Japan has to offer.

SPARK UP

Makes you go... Woo?

PERHAPS INFLUENCED BY John Woo's cinematic style, *Vanquish* tends to fill the screen with sparks whenever possible. You even leave a huge shower of sparks behind you as you slide from cover to cover. Running or walking just wouldn't be cool enough.

RUSSIAN AROUND

Cold War... in space!

THE RUSSIANS ARE still at it in the 'near future'. They just can't let bygones be bygones. This time they've used what was supposed to be an energy-harvesting satellite to destroy San Francisco. Many people left their hearts in San Francisco. Probably their legs, too. And brains.

FLUIDLY BODY

Like some metallic gazelle

SAM – VANQUISH'S BORINGLY but sort of patriotically named main character – can fling himself about the place with incredible speed and agility. If you've played *Gears Of War* and found it a tad on the sluggish, clumsy side, then this will come as a breath of fresh, shiny air.

HARDCORE

Not for the faint of thumb

VANQUISH IS NOT intended for a casual audience. In fact it's not intended for any specific audience other than the kind of people who tend to enjoy the kind of thing it is. And by that we don't mean *Gears Of War*, we mean *Bayonetta* and its frantic, uncompromising ilk.

BOSSY BOTS

Not a case of small man syndrome

IN THE TRADITION of many Japanese games, *Vanquish* features some truly huge boss enemies, some of which are the size of very large robots. Helpfully, weak points are highlighted in orange, but that doesn't make for straightforward fights, as you always need to be looking to move from cover to cover and picking your opportunities to attack.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

Whenever a Tier 1 operative has a poo behind a rock in the desert he has to use explosives to dispose of the evidence.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Medal Of Honor

It's no Modern Warfare beta

PS3

What happens when the people behind the *Battlefield* franchise try to clone *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare*? Well, worryingly, it seems they might rob their own formula of everything that makes it good and everything that sets it apart from other online multiplayer FPSs.

Medal Of Honor's multiplayer – at least in its current state – feels like the product of the publisher's desire to take its rivals on at their own game, and not like something a developer working to its own strengths would produce. DICE's games are about scale and the cut and thrust of two large forces working against each other. By being forced into a *Modern Warfare*-esque template, *Medal Of Honor* has lost all of that, and so far gained very little of what makes *Modern Warfare* work so well.

It looks nice and the shooting is certainly solid, but every game we've played of it so far felt completely uneventful. They all just blended into each other after a short while. *Battlefield* and *Modern Warfare* both have great multiplayer because they're set up in such a way that 'moments' will occur during pretty much every map. In *Battlefield*, those moments come from the use of vehicles and/or explosives and/or bold teamwork, but we've seen little of that in *Medal Of Honor*. In *Modern Warfare*, it's all about Killstreaks and how their use causes the tempo and tone of the action to rise and fall through the duration of the match. None of that in *Medal Of Honor* either. It just feels very flat.

Of course, we're basing this on a beta that features just two modes with a map each, but we'd have expected something better even at this stage. Perhaps DICE has some other tricks up its sleeve. Something on a larger scale, please.

If the multiplayer doesn't get much better than this we suppose it's not the end of the world, and we still have high hopes for *Medal Of Honor*'s single-player campaign, but for a game trying to go after *Modern Warfare* it is a pretty big deal to be apparently falling so short with only a few months of development left.

Medal Of Honor's multiplayer is being developed by DICE. Check the website for more details: **www.dice.se**

Mirror shades look cool, especially when accompanied by the coolest thing there is – a beard.

No sign of any vehicles in multiplayer yet, but DICE has hinted that they'll feature.

TOPPING THE CLASS

Points mean (a few) prizes

MEDAL OF HONOR has both the classes you'd expect from a *Battlefield* game and the levelling up and unlockables you'd expect from a *Modern Warfare* game. You essentially level up each class separately and slowly, perhaps a little too slowly, earn new weapons and upgrades. It adds a little bit of flavour, we suppose, but it certainly isn't as compelling as *MW2*'s multi-layered progression system.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- The single-player campaign avoids the silliness of *Modern Warfare 2*.
- Some clever and immersive use of sound effects and filters.
- Enemies do a lot of shouting, which helps you find them.
- There are many beards. Beards are awesome. Brian Blessed has one.

READ ME

The real-life Medal Of Honor is awarded for gallantry and intrepidity to those who go above and beyond the 'call of duty'.

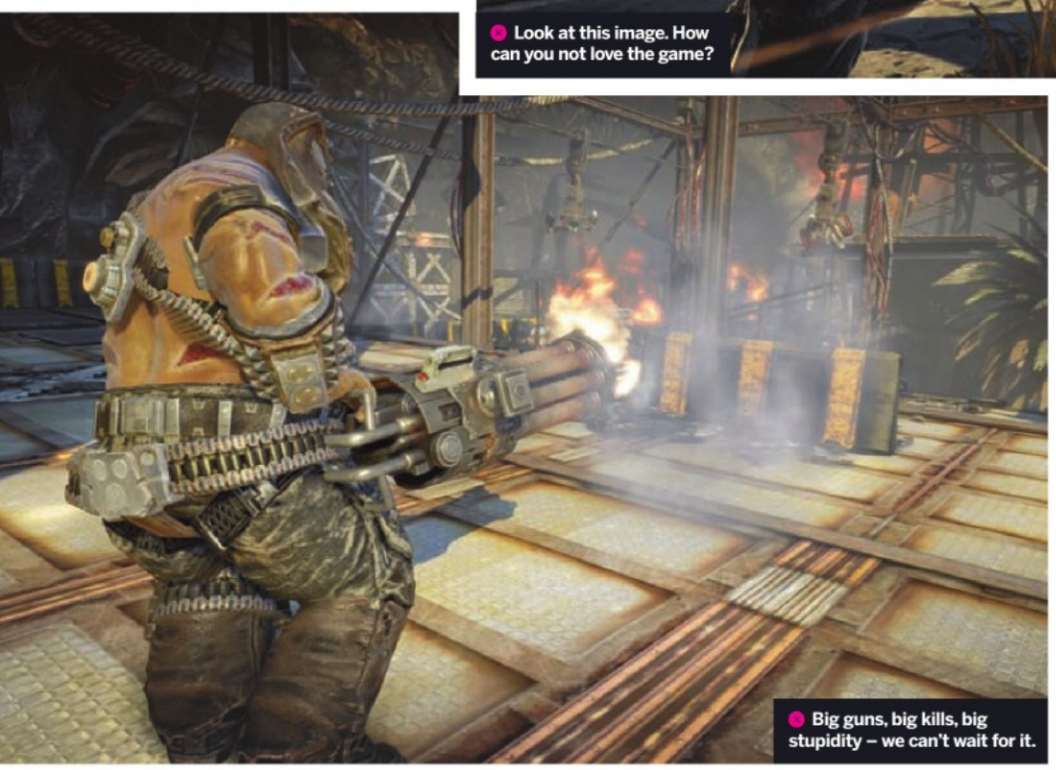
Combos are the way forward – zap and shoot, zap and shoot!

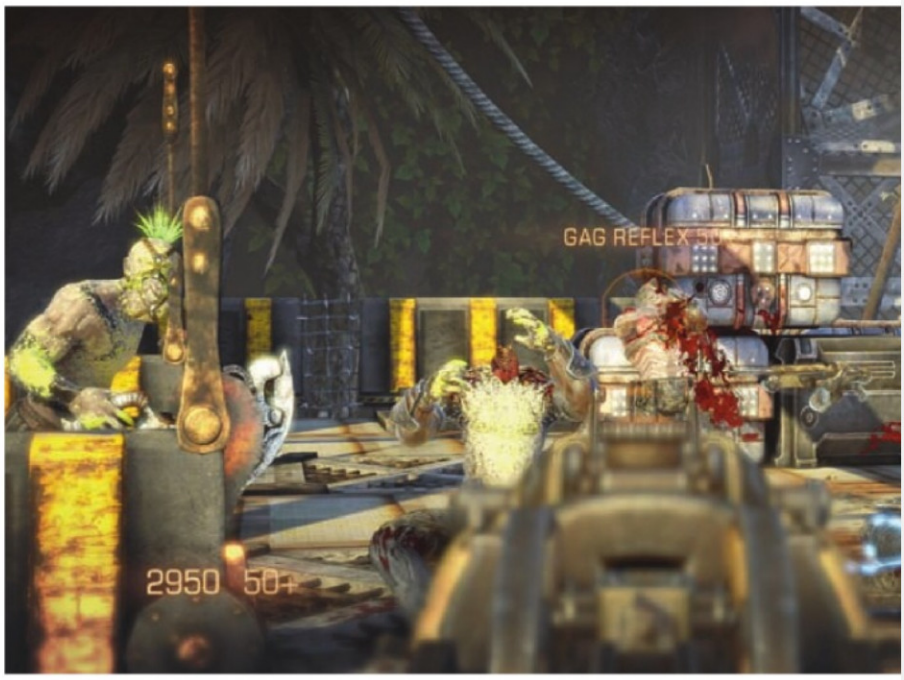
MULTISTORM

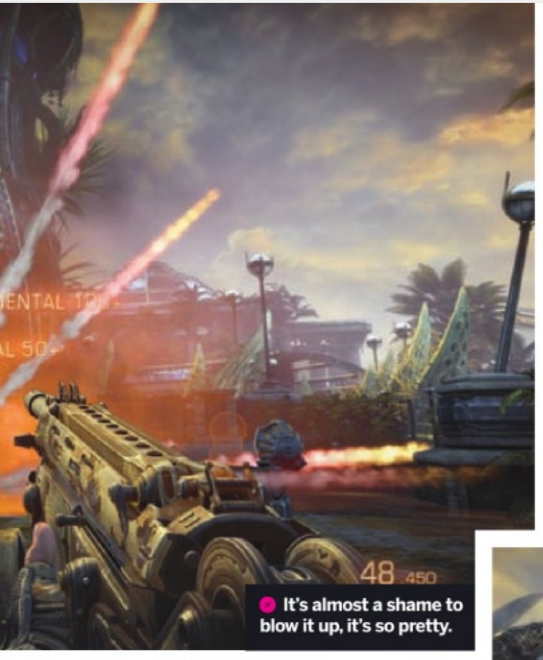
We wanted to say 'mulletstorm', but that made no sense

BULLETSTORM WILL BE going online, but we weren't privy to any information about it just yet. We do know there are no plans for co-op, so you can put those dreams to rest right now, but we've been assured there are "plans" for multiplayer. The way the single-player portion of *Bulletstorm* is shaping up, these plans could well be utterly fantastic.

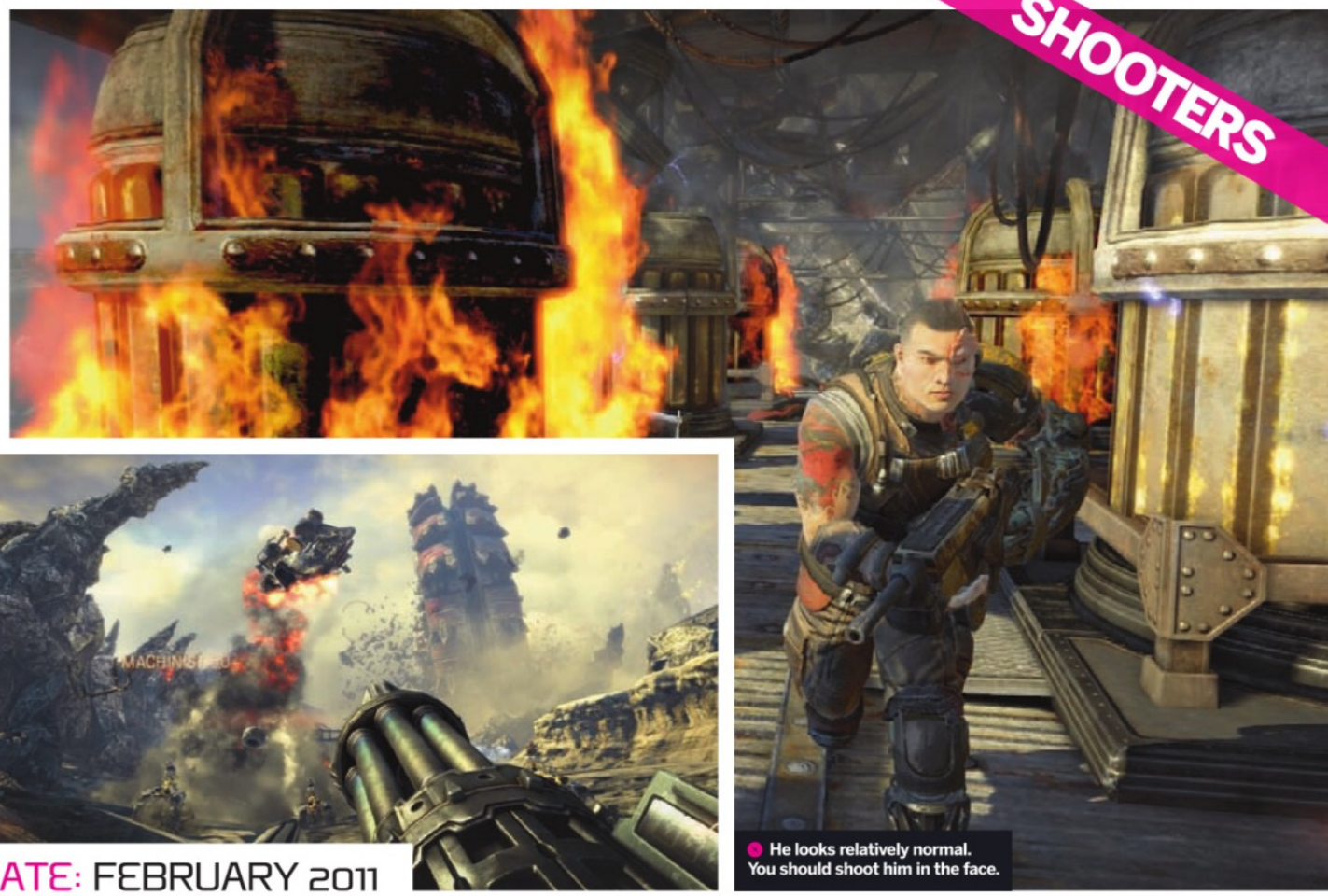
Look at this image. How can you not love the game?


Big guns, big kills, big stupidity – we can't wait for it.

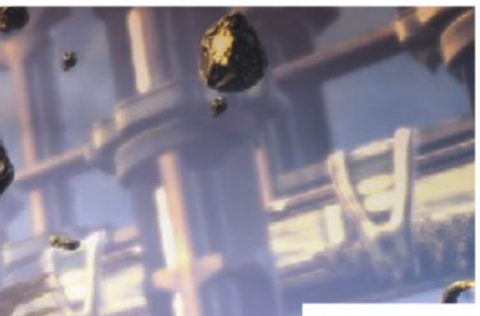


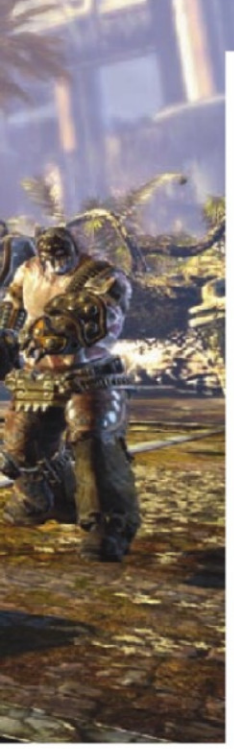


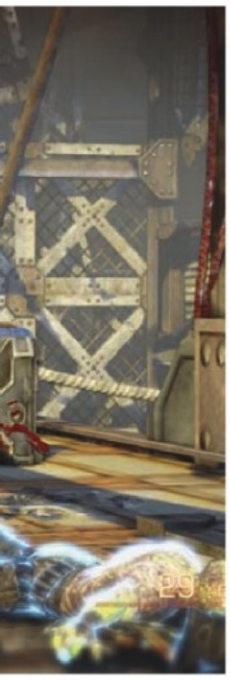
It's almost a shame to blow it up, it's so pretty.



He looks relatively normal. You should shoot him in the face.







RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2011

Bulletstorm

We sat down with Mark Morris, executive producer at EA, for a natter

PLAY developer Q&A

PS3

Do you think you have the market to yourself, in a way? *Bulletstorm* seems to be the only over-the-top shooter around right now.
Yeah, I think that's definitely a fair comment. When you look at the types of shooters that have been popular in the last five years they've kind of gravitated towards one side of the spectrum I think. They're very serious and militaristic – you're either fighting World War II or you're fighting modern wars, all the weaponry's modern. Even some of the science-fiction stuff is still near-future stuff. So there's a lot of choices on that side of the spectrum, but *Bulletstorm* is like 180 degrees the opposite. We don't take ourselves seriously, the weapons are extremely over the top, it's got a story and a main character that… it's not about one guy among a squad of ten, it's just trying to get by. This guy is front and centre: he's a pirate, he's a hero – he's an antihero to a certain extent. I think it's going to provide a nice choice – a different choice – for consumers when it comes out.

What is Epic's input like?
It's a very symbiotic relationship between People Can Fly and Epic Games – the game is PCF's, the idea was very much the founder's [Adrian Chmielarz] vision. I think Epic gives them room to breathe and to explore the game that they set out to make. But at the same time, Epic knows when to step in and push them, and challenge them, to make the game better. To polish the game, to balance the game, to focus them on the big picture of what it is to go from a very good game to a triple-A game… They feed off of each other, they challenge each other and I think it's a healthy relationship that basically keeps itself in good condition.

> I think it's going to provide a nice choice – a different choice – for consumers when it comes out

Is it helpful just to have Epic Games' name attached to the project?
Obviously Epic's name is great. It's going to get you through the door with certain customers – they may not be the most hardcore but they will be familiar with *Gears* [*Of War*] and they know that Epic Games is associated with *Gears*. So I think that's particularly good for People Can Fly because it gives them an avenue to a… maybe a slightly less core audience, and it will expose a slightly more casual game player, a slightly more casual customer to the type of gameplay we have in *Bulletstorm*: extremely fun and extremely over the top.

How open to experimentation/ sandboxy is the shooting system?
There's definitely a sandbox element to how players can approach a firefight… You can play [*Bulletstorm*] 'normally' if you want to, but you're not going to maximise your skill points. The smart players will take a step back and actually stop themselves from pulling the trigger sometimes and think 'you know what, actually, if I move to the right or the left that opportunity will be there for me to use the environment, for me to use the trash cans or just get a better angle on killing more guys with one shot instead of just one guy'. So it really does encourage you to think tactically and experiment with all these different possibilities.

Do you see the likes of *Modern Warfare 2* and even *Medal Of Honor* as direct competitors?
Yeah – we're in the same genre. There's always going to be some competition, there's always going to be some crossover with the customers – but I think our advantage is that we truly offer something that is different.

Bulletstorm is being developed by People Can Fly. Check out **www.bulletstorm.com** for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Ridiculous, over the top and doesn't take itself too seriously – brilliant.
- Looks like it could scratch that 'perfect run score attack' itch we have.
- The story has been written by a pro, so there's a chance it might be alright.
- It's not being pushed for its looks, but it *does* look good.

READ ME

This is People Can Fly's first console game, but the dev has a proven record for being bloody good on PC. Hopefully it'll carry over to PS3.

'Goliath' versus a Korean attack helicopter. Our money's on Goliath.

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2011

Homefront

Full of really Juche bits

PS3

At first sight *Homefront* looks like just another *Modern Warfare* clone, but it actually owes a lot more to the *Half-Life* series than any other. This is normally the part of the preview where we begin to tell you about the twist or the gimmick or the unique selling point, but *Homefront* doesn't have one in the conventional sense. It's a story-driven game in the sense that the story and setting have been devised first and take priority during the entire development of the game, and Kaos Studios is hoping to

emulate the superb storytelling and acute feeling of immersion achieved by Valve with the wonderful *Half-Life* games. John Milius, of *Conan The Barbarian*, *Apocalypse Now* and *Red Dawn* fame has also been brought on board to help.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

F.3.A.R.

Run away! Why? Is it scary? No...

PS3

There's nothing scarier than being on your own in a dark room late at night, playing a horror game sat right next to the screen. But there is something less scary – playing a horror game in a dark room late at night with someone else. Sociable, yes. Fun, maybe. But scary? Nah. Surely the presence of another ordinary, real-life human, even if they are just a voice on a headset, can only serve to remind you that you're not in a haunted house shooting, er... scary things – you're in pyjamas in your own house. It's not as

Paxton Fettel is one guy you don't ever want giving you a hand.

scary. So yes, for a game named after the emotion that makes us scream and run away, *F.3.A.R.* and its new emphasis on co-op doesn't really have that effect. Except maybe the running away bit.

We've said this before, but the screens, pretty as they are, do not do this game any justice at all.

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Crysis 2

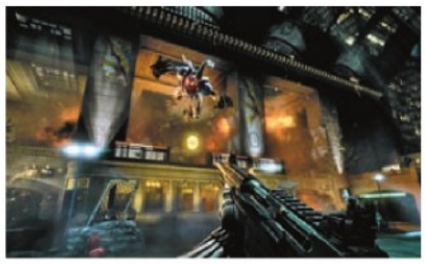
We know all there is to know...

PS3

...about the new *Crysis* game. Actually we don't, because if we knew all there is to know about it that would mean we'd played it all the way through at least twice and this would be a big, fat review, or possibly even a guide, not just a half-page preview. But we do know more about it now than we did last month.

For example, we know that all the hype about its visuals is not just hype. We've seen *Crysis 2* in action with our very own eyes and it gave our very own eyes an eye-stiffy. But Crytek didn't make the CryEngine 2 just to give everyone eye-stiffies. We also now know that an engine of CryEngine 2's power and versatility is entirely necessary to accommodate the ambitions of a game like *Crysis 2*.

The all-too-brief demo we had was on a par with the best action movies we've ever seen, only a lot better because it was a game. A lovely, lovely shooting game. Our hero – we call him Mr Nano after the Hulk Hogan movie *Mr Nanny* – has to find and use the detonator for



a lot of explosives after the solider who was meant to activate it has been killed. The whole sequence ends with Mr Nano being thrown out of a building by an alien, but he still has the detonator and sets it off. Then there's a perfect ending – a really big explosion. Yay!

Crysis 2 is being developed by Crytek. Check out the website for more details on the game: **www.crytek.com**.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- The graphics are flipping amazing. Some of the best we've seen.
- Crytek has put its money where its mouth is with the storytelling.
- Has been designed to accommodate different gameplay styles.
- One of the most breathtakingly cinematic games ever.

Everything symbolic of New York City, even the cabs, gets the crap kicked out of it by aliens.

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2011

Rage

So beautiful we could just kiss id

We appeared to have stumbled upon a post-apocalyptic theme pub.

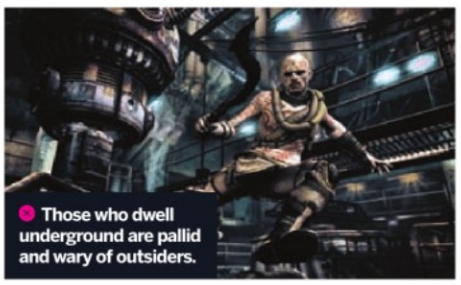
PS3

We didn't expect to come away from E3 saying this, but *Killzone 3* did not have the best graphics at the show. Neither did *Crysis 2*. Both were stunning to look at, but the game that takes the prestigious 'OMG that's, like, the best looking game, like, evaaaah!' award is *Rage*. You can't really tell from the screenshots, but it is more detailed and more lifelike than anything else we've ever seen. Even our own reflections in the mirror seem a bit fuzzy 'round the edges by comparison.

We were taken through a ruined city and saw none of the cookie-cutter scenery you'd normally expect from such an environment. Everything looked unique, purpose-built and deliberate. We've seen game environments successfully create an *illusion* of this kind of uniqueness before, but seeing it for real just shows you how easy you are to fool. It makes *so* much difference.

And the action is just as detailed as the visuals, with tons of nice touches making the whole experience very engaging. Like the bit where a giant *Resistance 2*-esque monster appears in the city and, at first, makes dust fall from structures all around you then eventually sends your entire world into a massive, uncontrollable fit of the shakes. It's the gaming equivalent of eating too many doughnuts.

Rage is being developed by id Software. Check the website for more details: **www.idsoftware.com**.



Those who dwell underground are pallid and wary of outsiders.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- This is officially the best-looking game we've ever seen.
- Features some truly extraordinary attention to detail.
- The shooting is so solid, that 'solid' doesn't really do it justice.
- It's got bits and pieces of other game styles keeping it varied.

Armageddon will take you on an underground journey of destruction.

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2011

Red Faction: Armageddon

All you need is glove

PS3

Still based on the red sands of Mars, well under them to be precise, *Red Faction Armageddon* sees a direct descendant of Alec Mason continue the fight, but as well as a collection of sweet tattoos and a bitchin vest this guy has a fancy new uber-gauntlet known as the Nano Forge.

This thing has more technical wizardry than an iPhone 4 (but is probably easier to get hold of) and our favourite feature is the magnet draw which allows you to tag separate entities and then flick a switch to have them pull together and collide. This has hilarious results when applied to a group of enemies but even more explosive results when scenery is tagged and smashed to the floor, making for levels of destruction never before seen in a *Red Faction* game.

See? Nothing like *Gears*... oh wait.

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Quantum Theory

It might still surprise us

PS3

It's not long now until *Quantum Theory* finally comes out, but that still means there's enough time for Tecmo Koei to change its name another eight times just to confuse us all. Nevertheless, impressions of the game so far have been decent – while some are unimpressed with how much of a *Gears Of War* derivative it seems to be, we would argue that it doesn't matter, seeing as we'll never see *Gears Of War* on our beloved PlayStation 3s. Other than that it looks to be playing pretty well and is visually quite nice – if not a bit chunky and metallic.

We're definitely reserving judgement here, though, as *Quantum Theory* really could go either way. It has as much chance of being a surprise hit as it does a complete flop.

You could be going head-to-head with up to 50 enemies in *Brotherhood*.

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

Ezio and the art of guerrilla war

Rome is Ezio's new stomping ground and is several times bigger than Florence.

PS3

For a series that has thus far been fairly well associated with high production value action, *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* is having a good stab (pun intended) at outstripping its previous outings. In the action stakes at least *Brotherhood* is looking like the most accomplished of the titles and that's some going.

Of course the action stakes were raised even before development on this game began, when it was decided that *Assassin's Creed* should move into the multiplayer field. Multiplayer means a lot more fighting and a lot more dynamic action. For instance, we can't say we've ever noticed *Modern Warfare 2* players politely waiting while their team-mates shoot at someone. It's a free for all and the combat in *Assassin's Creed* will be reflecting that with more aggressive fighting abilities. That's good news.

But it does tie back into the single-player, which is looking much stronger than we would have assumed when this game was announced. With the ability to train and level up assassins as your personal army, you can have them help you out in assassinations. That can mean direct attacks on enemies, creating distractions or simply standing side by side with Ezio in the fight. Their skills and weapons will also be left up to you to decide.

> It's a free for all and the combat in Assassin's Creed will be reflecting that with more aggressive fighting abilities

And you're going to need that help. Another area in which *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* is improving the single-player scope is by increasing the number of enemies that can be on screen at any given time. 15 or so seemed like a lot before, but now as many as 50 seem likely at times. That's a challenge that even a honed fighter like Ezio will need more than a hidden blade to defeat. Like a cannon perhaps.

Brotherhood will begin with Ezio back at the estate with his uncle having defeated his enemies in *Assassin's Creed II*, but suddenly Papal forces lay siege to the town. Ezio must fight his way through soldiers and panicking crowds to man a cannon and take out the hundreds of troops below. It promises to be a dazzling set-piece opener for the game, going far beyond anything we've seen in previous *Assassin's Creed* titles.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

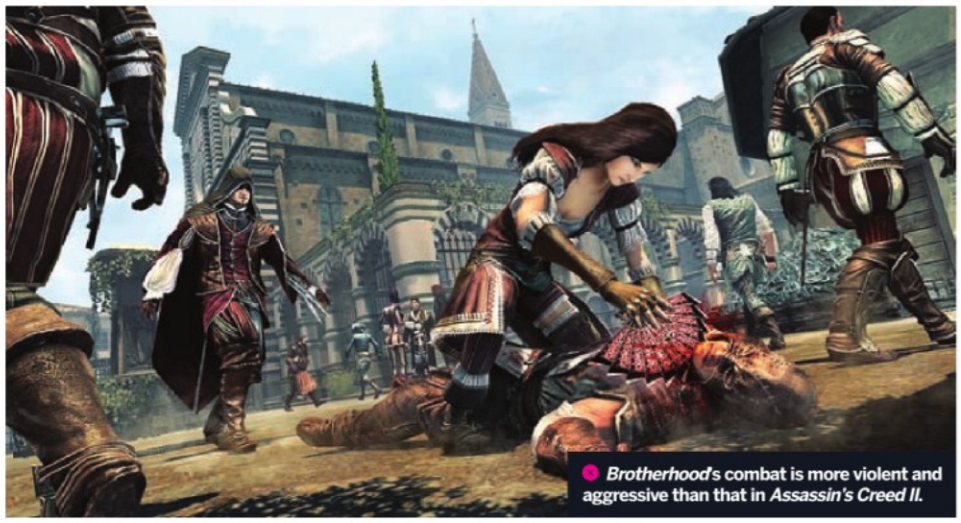
- The new setting of Rome is several times bigger than Florence in *ACII*.
- The combat in *Brotherhood* has been sharpened up to be more aggressive.
- Online is already sounding like it could open up a new era for this series.
- Ubisoft is clearly treating this as a full release and not just a spin-off.

READ ME

Ubisoft believes putting a number at the end of the title (eg *Assassin's Creed II*) should be reserved for new settings. Hence this isn't *ACIII*.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

You can create and train your own army of assassins who will assist you in a number of different ways.



Brotherhood's combat is more violent and aggressive than that in *Assassin's Creed II*.

As of course does the multiplayer, which interestingly will be based upon the training regime of the Templar order for its 'subjects'. This helps to justify the multiplayer from a narrative point of view, but also allows for lots of gameplay mechanics that play on the fictional nature of what's taking place. By supposing that everyone is essentially 'playing' in the Animus you can have respawning, XP and appearance altering. It's the same basic ideas that worked so well in the first game, only now extended to multiple players with a much more fluid environment.

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood is in the safe hands of Ubisoft Montreal. You can discover more about it at **assassinscreed.us.ubi.com/brotherhood**

WANTED: DEAD OR DEAD

The first multiplayer mode revealed

THE FIRST MULTIPLAYER game mode to be revealed by Ubisoft is called Wanted. This mode is an all-for-one proposition, but rather than a deathmatch you'll be given one target to kill. This player character will also be given a target and his target will be after someone else and so on. Basically you're all after your own guy as they hunt their guy and all you have is an image of their appearance. You need to find your target, but not at the expense of exposing yourself to the person looking for you. It's a great idea and we can't wait to try it out.

ACTION

Stormtroopers are really getting a hard time in *Force Unleashed II*.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II

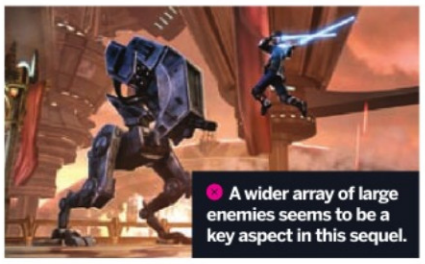
Starkiller brings his A-game to the party

PS3

Variety seems to be the watchword for LucasArts as it attempts to build on the huge commercial success of Force Unleashed with something that might be a little better received by critics. Not that the critics of the original game did it much harm, but the Star Wars brand alone isn't enough to achieve success. Building a good game around that name is a much safer option.

The foundation was good and variety really was the only thing that was missing. The array of enemies put up against you for instance is one area LucasArts wants to build on, forcing you to switch up your tactics and give your combat a little more interest. You'll also have new moves, such as the mind trick that will make enemies throw themselves off cliffs and high ledges. With all the great physics of the first game, throwing in new moves should make things look a bit more interesting.

Level variety is probably the area that needed the most attention, but it's one area we've yet to see much of. Imperial ships and distant forest moons would seem like a certainty, but it's not just about location so much as structure. Hopefully we'll see a little more of that soon. In the mean time there's much to be enthusiastic about as you'll know if you saw the last cinematic trailer.



A wider array of large enemies seems to be a key aspect in this sequel.

LucasArts is handling **Force Unleashed II** once again. Find out more at **www.lucasarts.com/games/theforceunleashed2**

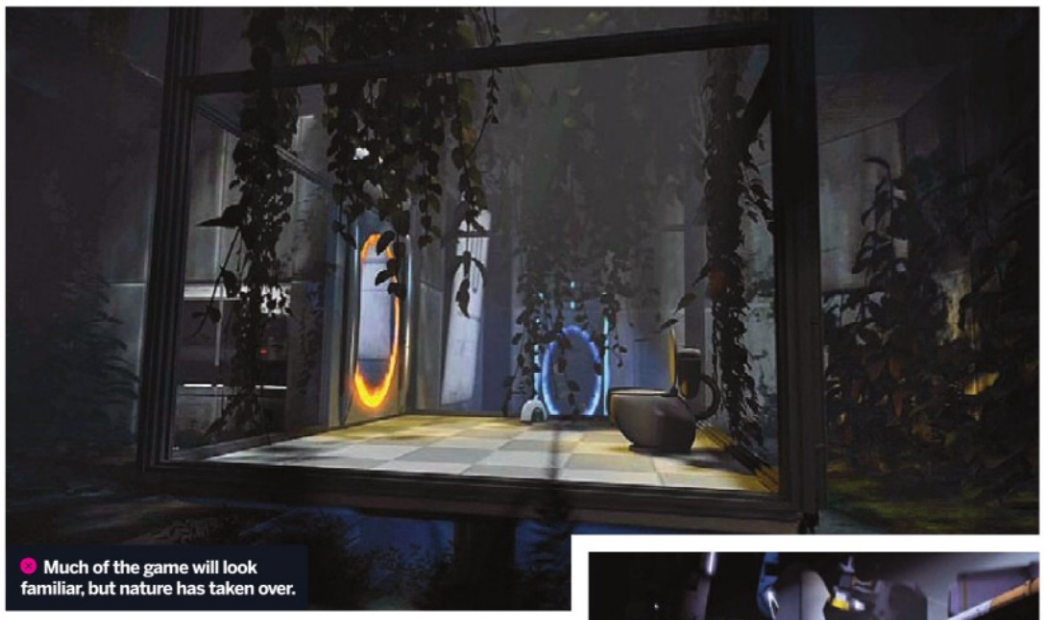
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Reworked visuals that make an already-good-looking game even sharper.
- Greater variety of moves in combat that should really make you feel powerful.
- Another intriguing chapter in the *Star Wars* story, easily better than *Attack Of The Clones*.
- There's much promise of some really exciting and possibly terrifying boss battles.

Starkiller's Force powers are as potent as ever, as are *Force Unleashed*'s physics.

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 2011

Portal 2 The bitch is back


Much of the game will look familiar, but nature has taken over.

PS3

Wait, don't Valve hate the PS3? Don't we therefore hate Valve?

No, not at all. We love Valve and now Valve loves the PS3, too. We love Valve because although it's been critical of the PS3 in the past it never stopped being one of the best developers in the world. *Half-Life*? Amazing. *Portal*? Superb. *Team Fortress 2*? Excellent. That's a pedigree we wanted on PS3 and thankfully Valve has listened.

But, wasn't Valve really quite nasty about Sony?

Yes, but that's all in the past now. Gabe Newell has described the PS3 as being in the best place to handle the challenges of the future and said it will get the best console version of *Portal 2*.

Okay, so it's one big love-in now, but does *Portal* even need a sequel?

Good question. We see where you're coming from, but yeah we think it does. *Portal* was really an experiment as much as anything, only it was a very successful one. At around four hours long (max) it was more of a taster of a game than a full game, but it was so perfectly formed that no one really felt shortchanged. Now Valve can go back and deliver a much deeper, bigger and more diverse puzzle game. And we can see GLaDOS again.

Valve is still handling **Portal 2** in-house with many of the original team. There's always plenty of info at **www.thinkwithportals.com**

All your favourite 'characters' from the first game will be making a return.

Aperture Science labs have fallen into disrepair since the first game.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- GLaDOS returns and has every chance of being more twisted than ever.
- You have a brand-new AI companion of your own. He may not be too smart.
- New puzzle elements such as liquids and stasis fields will create new challenges.
- Dynamic test chambers will mean constantly evolving puzzles.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow

Is this finally the winning formula?

Wardrobe malfunctions like this are common in the vampire world.

This guy is the 'Evil Butcher'. He may pose something of a challenge.

PS3

If there's just one thing that keeps us thinking that *Castlevania* may finally have found a formula to make it work in three dimensions then it's the promise of cleverly managed and timed progression through *Lords Of Shadow*. While its mechanics and combat have been compared a great deal with certain Greek warriors with a penchant for fighting deities, there's more to Gabriel Belmont than his whip sword.

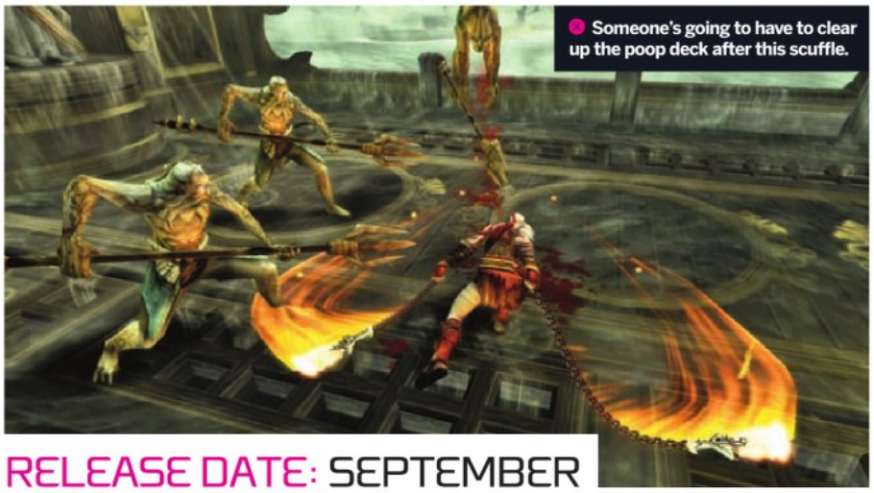
The key is how some of the core values of the *Castlevania* series such as exploration, levelling up of abilities and how those abilities unlock areas of the game have been integrated into the third-person action genre. Sure, Gabriel can perform combos by hitting variations of light and heavy attacks and he can air juggle and he'll unlock even more combos as he goes, but exploration still feels key. It's an area that *God Of War III* had mixed success with, but *Castlevania* is claiming it back.

Because of this *Lords Of Shadow*, despite its crazy 3D look and all those weird hi-res graphics, still does a great job of feeling like a *Castlevania* game. We still think there's a place for its 2D roots, but *Lords Of Shadow* could well begin a brand-new chapter for the franchise.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- All the classic ghosts, ghouls and monsters of the *Castlevania* series.
- Great combat mechanics with excellent combo levelling system.
- An amazing mix of third-person action with classic *Castlevania* gameplay.
- Impressive bosses that really change up the pace of the game.

Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow is being developed by MercurySteam in collaboration with Kojima Productions. Check out **www.konami.jp/castlevania/en**



Someone's going to have to clear up the poop deck after this scuffle.

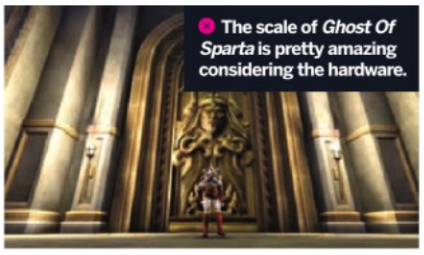
RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta

Revenge is a dish best served as take away

PSP

While the future of Kratos remains in some doubt, his past still seems rich with possibility. No wonder then that the critically applauded makers of *Chains Of Olympus*, Ready At Dawn Studios, would look to mine this virgin territory in order to keep the myth of the Ghost of Sparta alive. While the main series of *God Of War* may be up in the air at the present time, it's clear he still has plenty more stories to tell.



The scale of *Ghost Of Sparta* is pretty amazing considering the hardware.

This is exactly how Kratos likes to be; on top and in control.

Ghost Of Sparta is set between the first and second game in the series, filling in some gaps from after Kratos defeated Ares and became the god of war. It seems that having gained his divine power he decided to take a little break in Atlantis. Given its association with the sea, Atlantis has lots of running water making the city one of constant movement. Sony believes that it's got the best-looking PSP game ever on its hands with *Ghost Of Sparta* and we find it hard to disagree with visuals like that.

On his way to Atlantis Kratos will take on the sea beast Scylla (bringing back memories of the Hydra from *God Of War*) and later meet King Midas. Ready At Dawn is promising lots of bosses, though, and an adventure that far outstrips *Chains Of Olympus* in terms of scope and length.

Ready At Dawn returns to the **God Of War** series for **Ghost Of Sparta**. Find out more at **www.spartansstandtall.com**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Some of the best-looking visuals we've ever seen on the PSP.
- Another fantastic handheld adventure for Kratos to play on the go.
- A completely new location to explore that has never featured before.
- Kratos is alive and well thanks to these PSP spin-off games.

ACTION

We can't help but be excited by a game that looks as good as this.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Enslaved: Odyssey To The West

No more monkeying around

PS3

Ninja Theory's latest game has been on our radar for some time. Since its first demo we've been impressed and it continues to astonish us. Hopefully you're beginning to see what we've been raving about.

Enslaved's visuals are very impressive if only because of the amount of colour they show off, but the quality isn't only surface deep. Comparisons to *Uncharted 2* are as valid when you consider the game's characters, story and set piece progression. Ninja Theory has come a long way since *Heavenly Sword*, finding a nice balance between combat, puzzles, cut-scenes and set pieces. *Enslaved* is looking like a serious contender for the end of the year. We just hope it doesn't get crowded out by noisier and bigger titles come October.

Lego games seem to be on the up again.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars

No need to Force this down our throats

PS3

The only real surprise about this title is that it's taken this long to come about. We didn't have LucasArts down as a publisher that chose to bide its time too often. Then again it's had TT Games working on the *Indiana Jones* titles in the meantime so we guess a break was to be expected. Anyway, with *Lego Harry Potter* also recently released, TT Games has been busy with its Lego games.

If that was anything to go by then it's found a formula for these games that hits the spot. Whether it be magic or the Force, Lego games come alive in these universes and *Clone Wars* should be a good location to continue the legacy. The game will be taking its inspiration from the animated TV show and will include events from both seasons.

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2011

Deus Ex: Human Revolution

A mechanical wonder with human soul

PS3

Finding a balance somewhere between FPS action, stealth and RPG plotting sits *Deus Ex* in the minds of many seasoned gamers and *Human Revolution* from Eidos Montreal is not looking to shake up that formula too much. Bringing the game forward in time by a few years has set the developer free to take the franchise in any direction it sees fit (made all the easier by no members of the original dev team working on this prequel). However, that doesn't mean it isn't showing the utmost respect to what's come before.

The big difference according to Eidos is that you'll be given a little more choice in exactly how you want to take this game on. Do you want it to be more action based or stealth based? Do you want to beef out our new hero Adam Jensen with heavy tech or will you look for something subtler? These are decisions the developer will be leaving to you. Keeping the game open to your choices and allowing for lots of different gameplay solutions is what Eidos hopes will set *Deus Ex* apart from its imitators.

One example could be gaining entrance to a location where you need to speak with a contact or grab an item. You could go in strong, bashing heads together and fighting your way through or you could also attempt to charm your way in by engaging in some conversation with doormen or guards, perhaps convincing them to let you in. There may, however, also be some secret entrance via a vent or nearby sewer. No choice seems to be better or worse in terms of outcome other than whether or not you prefer one course of action to another. Sounds like the right kind of choices to us.

Eidos Montreal is developing **Deus Ex: Human Revolution** and has been since around 2007. You can find out more at **www.deusex.com**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- An amazing set of locations that mix stunning visuals with lighting.
- A complex mix of gaming styles all mashed up together.
- Some of the most dazzling visuals we've seen in a while.
- Another complex and twisting plot of conspiracy and betrayal.

READ ME

The original *Deus Ex* was developed by the John Romero-founded Ion Storm and released in 2000 on PC.

EFFORTLESS COOL

Suave and sophisticated

ONE QUALITY THAT could have been difficult to recapture for Eidos Montreal was the cool factor of the original Ion Storm *Deus Ex* games. Those games oozed class and that's no easy thing to replicate. What we've seen of *Human Revolution* so far suggests it's already getting there.

WHAT A BEAUT

Hey, good-looking

HOPEFULLY YOU CAN tell from these screens and from other images of *Deus Ex* we've been printing in **Play** in the last few months, visually speaking *Human Revolution* is something special. We're not just talking textures here either; the whole world looks amazingly well designed.

WEAPON OF CHOICE

Guns galore (and more)

THANKS TO HIS augmentations Jensen has an array of weaponry to choose from. While guns may seem like an obvious choice thanks to *Human Revolution*'s cover system, it may not be smart. Jensen's arms may also store a few sharp surprises for your enemies.

MODIFIED MAN

No mercy

DEUS EX: HUMAN *Revolution* will begin with Adam Jensen being attacked by mercenaries leaving him with injuries that will kill him unless augmentation surgery is performed. This leaves Jensen with the cybernetic implants and arms you see now and can modify through the game.

For some reason this image really brought *Street Fighter II* to mind.

Destructible environments promise to be a key tactical advantage for Raiden.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Metal Gear Solid: Rising

Raiden proves himself a fine sushi chef

PS3

As the days and weeks since E3 have passed more information has slowly begun to emerge about *Metal Gear Solid: Rising*. We know the game is set between Raiden's lead appearance in *Sons Of Liberty* and his return as a cyborg in *Guns Of The Patriots*, for instance. We also know that this game will fill in some of those gaps in-between. We know that Raiden as a cyborg can absorb the energy cores of other cyborgs as was evidenced in the trailer. Most importantly we know that Raiden has come of age as a character and no longer feels like the damp squib of a hero that he seemed in his last starring role.

Rising is much more methodical than we expected, but that's actually a good thing.

What we weren't too clear on, though, were things like the balance of gameplay and what Lightning Action Game really meant. Some of that is beginning to come through. The swordplay in the E3 trailer was impressive, but it's there for more than just looks. Precision cutting is important if you want to get to those precious power cores undamaged. Making different kinds of cuts will lead to different rewards according to the developer. Some enemies, though, will have thick armour on so you'll also need that precision cutting to hit the weak points of enemies. It brings an element of strategy to what many believed could end up being a hack-'n'-slash action fest. This makes more sense to us.

Kojima Productions is in charge of **Metal Gear Solid: Rising**, even though Hideo has taken a step back. There's more to see at **www.konami.jp/mgsr**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Some fantastic-looking action that turns what we know about *Metal Gear* on its head.
- Finally elevates Raiden as a hero we can really get behind as we saw from *MGS 4*.
- Graphically *Rising* really looks to be pushing the boundaries beyond *Guns Of The Patriots*.
- The slicing mechanic is being used in a really smart way to add strategy to the game.

The 'give us a kiss' monster is not one of Isaac's favourites.

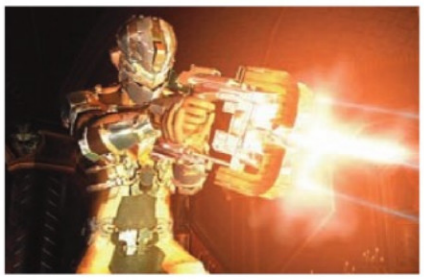
RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2011

Dead Space 2

It's enough to take your breath away

PS3

Zombies in space. Haven't we been here before?
Yes, we're back in space again and, yes, the Necromorphs are still a cause for concern, but as for 'being here before' you couldn't be more wrong. *Dead Space 2* is not only more refined and better equipped, it's also bigger, bolder and scarier than ever before.



Scarier? How do you work that out?
True, it's not an easy thing to measure as such, but the fact that it's scary at all after all the different ways the last game attempted to get a jump out of us is some evidence of this. You might think Visceral Games would have run out of ways to surprise us, but thankfully that's not the case. It's even made Isaac a better fighter and we were still terrified.

It would seem that Isaac will begin in his old armour, with upgrades later.

So what's making the difference?
We'd say it's probably the location. Having moved from the tight confines of a single ship to the wider spaces of a space station named The Sprawl, there's now a lot more ways and angles from which to be attacked. You would think the tight spaces would have been scarier, but actually having lots of room, but not knowing what's lurking in it works better. It's a curious thing. Throw in some more of those undead babies that Visceral seems to love so much and you can colour us pale with terror.

Visceral Games continues to keep a tight grip on **Dead Space** and with good reason. For more details visit **deadspace.ea.com**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Tighter controls and smoother action should make it more compelling to play.
- A bigger environment to explore that actually seems to have added to the tension.
- Some new variations on the Necromorphs to surprise you and tear you to pieces.
- The horrid conspiracies behind the outbreak should hopefully become clearer.

A new location also means a whole new set of monsters to dispose of.

New Marais is a stunning new location that offers Cole a real parkour challenge.

All Cole's powers from the last game will be there for you from the start.

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2011

inFamous 2

With great power comes buckets of chaos

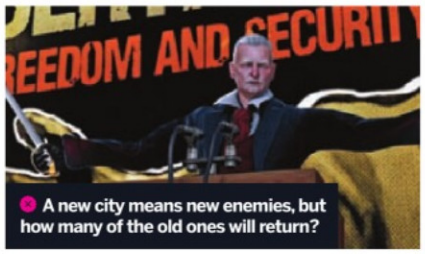
PS3

Cole MacGrath is back. Oh, you heard about that. Yes, we did cover *inFamous 2* pretty extensively last issue, but Sucker Punch's game is so immense that even that big feature didn't give you the whole story. More info is coming to the foreground now.

One key feature of the game that we didn't get much time to talk about last issue was pacing. The first game could be quite pedestrian in the early stages thanks to the fact Cole was still picking up powers and learning new skills. With *inFamous 2* he is already able to glide, float and speed around so that should kick things off at a reasonable pace. Throw in that fight against the Beast at the beginning of the game and we think you'll be in the thick of the action sooner than you would imagine.

But pace isn't just about running speed, it's also about set pieces, which have been beefed up from *inFamous 2*. Bosses and heavy enemies (such as gunships) have been given a high priority by Sucker Punch so the game will be broken up with periods of intense, cinematic quality action. With Cole's emerging new powers, destructible environments and even more dramatic physics effects the final experience is something to behold.

Sucker Punch is really upping its game for this one and we'll be paying very close attention to how *inFamous 2* develops in the next year or so.



A new city means new enemies, but how many of the old ones will return?

inFamous 2 is being developed by Sucker Punch and its official site can be found at **www.infamousthegame.com**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A beautiful new city with even more variety of environments than before.
- A much cooler looking Cole who looks much more like an extreme athlete.
- Sucker Punch is really coming to terms with the PS3 hardware this time around.
- Everything about the last game is being tightened and improved.

Some of the weapon combinations can be, let's say, explosive.

Everyone loves an improvised flame-thrower. Even the zombies seem to like it.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Dead Rising 2

Old habits die hard

PS3

There are aspects of *Dead Rising 2* that Capcom has worked hard to be very ambiguous about, but as the game draws closer to release the true nature of the things that have changed (or not changed) in this sequel from the original game is becoming clearer. As it turns out Blue Castle's interpretation of Keiji Inafune's game is sticking religiously close to its original, concentrating changes in only a few specific areas.

That means no change to the save system, which was something many hoped for. Capcom's explanation is that the save system (of going back to the safe room) is integral to the character of the game. What will feel new to those who played the original is the prominence of toilets and how well signposted they are, as these too can be used as save points, it's just a lot of people never noticed.

Another feature carrying over is that you'll be able to (and perhaps need to if you want to collect everything) play through the game multiple times while retaining your experience points. This was another feature that divided people. However, against the backdrop of customisable weapons, hundreds of zombies on screen and more balanced boss fights, *Dead Rising 2* is clearly an improved prospect.

Dead Rising 2 is being developed by Blue Castle Games. You can find out more about the series at **www.capcom.com/deadrising**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- More zombies on screen than you could feasibly count without getting bitten.
- Create your own weapons by combining household items. Torch + jewels = laser sword!
- A massive world to explore with a huge amount of variety in-between.
- Several times more game thanks to the addition of online multiplayer.

The location will be a major feature of *True Crime*.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

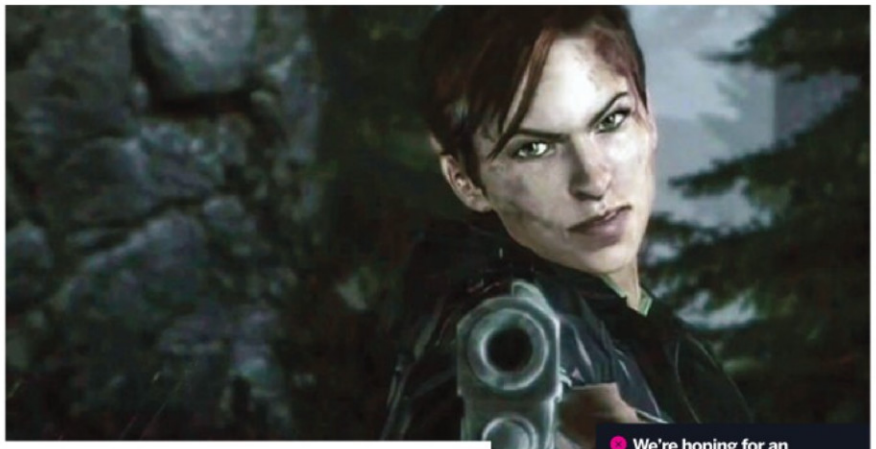
True Crime: Hong Kong

Living the street life

PS3

With its focus on extreme action it would seem that United Front Games is keen to blast any preconceptions we may have had about the *True Crime* franchise away. It was a testament to the fresh start the developer was applying to the series that its latest game lacked any subtitle. However, this game is now known as *True Crime: Hong Kong*, which is a nod we think to the importance of the setting of this new addition to the *True Crime* series.

Many developers will talk about cities being like another character in the game, but when you're taking Hong Kong as your inspiration there's really no need to create a personality for your setting. There's so much colour, flavour and noise in Hong Kong that capturing only a small amount of it would probably be enough to make it seem like a wonderful backdrop to your game.



We're hoping for an improvement on *Homecoming*.

RELEASE DATE: APRIL 2011

Silent Hill

It's all a little mist-erious

PS3

Embracing its twisted roots for another spin around the town of Silent Hill, Konami could well be going to darker places than ever before. We say this because much like *Silent Hill: Homecoming*, the lead character is going to be someone with a somewhat dark past that could manifest itself in horrific ways in the game.

Murphy Pendleton is an escaped convict who survives his prison transport crashing only to find himself in Silent Hill. Probably not where he was looking to end up. Konami is promising lots of twists and turns in the plot as well as an array of only the most basic forms of weaponry that should please hardcore fans of the series. It will need to be a significant improvement on *Homecoming*, though, if it really wants to please fans, but we think Konami has been listening to that game's critics.

As you can see the game is much better looking and much smoother.

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2011

Dragon Age II

There and back again, if you're lucky

PS3

In the games industry there are a handful of developers whose name alone is enough to get us excited about a new title and BioWare is one of them. While it may be more firmly associated with the Xbox and PC we can't deny the quality of games like *Baldur's Gate*, *Neverwinter Nights*, *Knights Of The Old Republic* and *Mass Effect*. Of course, we got a taste of the sweet, sweet BioWare fruit last year thanks to *Dragon Age: Origins*, a brand-new fantasy RPG that seemed to tap into BioWare's development past. If that taste left you craving more or even if it left you feeling a little flat then *Dragon Age II* is probably going to appeal.

The first thing to make clear is that this is very much a game being designed with the console market in mind and by that we don't mean that it will be watered down or less challenging. What we mean and what BioWare means by that is optimised controls, tighter interfaces and more responsive combat. There are ultimately different conventions to RPG combat on PC and console and we like to mash buttons sometimes. The timed combat of *Origins* was deemed by some to be sluggish, but *DAII* is faster and more fluid.

The deep tactical layer that stood behind everything in *Origins* remains however. Squads can still be given a series of predetermined spells and attacks to use, they can be given orders and they can even be sent to deal with things on their own. Sending party members off to fight solo battles has its risks and rewards and should they die then you've lost them for good. That could be a problem if they are a class that you desperately need.

> The Mage can lift an enemy into the air and tear them into two using magic – a gruesome, but impressive end

And class balance is another area BioWare has improved upon in *Dragon Age II*. Some complained that there wasn't much point in having anything but Mages and Warriors in your team given how similar the Rogue was to the latter. In *DAII* the Rogue is a much stealthier and more tactically useful class in the game, doing more than just opening chests for you. That may seem a bit harsh, but really the Rogue was a little bit pointless in *Origins* and that's being put straight for the sequel. All classes now have finishing moves, too, for taking out bosses and other assorted minions. One example is the Mage who can lift an enemy into the air and then tear them into two using magic. A gruesome, but impressive end we hope you'll agree.

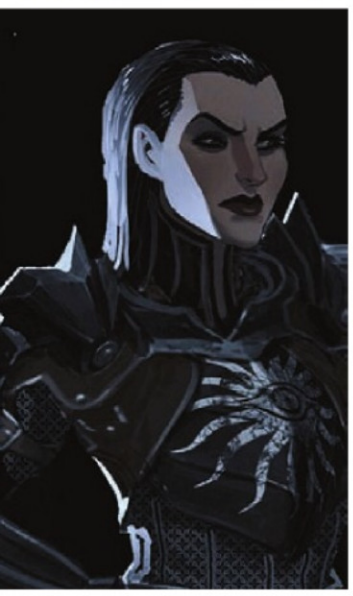
All of this obviously gives you a slightly tougher decision to make when you start the game as to what class you're going to play as, but BioWare has relieved us of one big choice by making only a male or female human available as your main character. If you have a save game from *Origins* then the data of choices you made in that game will carry over to *DAII*, but your hero will not. You'll be starting this game with a brand-new character called Hawke (you get to choose their first name) and a brand-new story that starts during the events of *Origins* as you escape through the Free Marches from the Blight of Lothering. Then you need to pick a class of Warrior, Mage or Rogue. From there the character is yours to upgrade and customise as you see fit through the game, although there is one other new addition that wasn't in the first game; a voice.

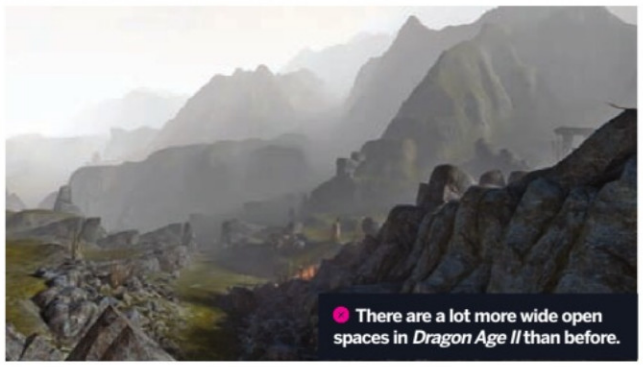
The lead character of the game will now speak, which BioWare hopes will make players feel a little >

Can you trust the tale being told by Varric? Only time will tell.

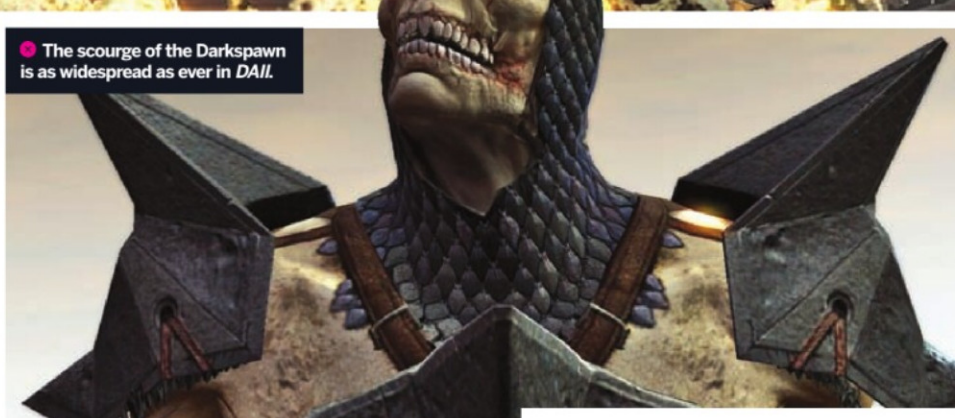
Epic locations like this are something you can look forward to from *DAII*.

You couldn't very well call it *Dragon Age* without some dragons could you?





There are a lot more wide open spaces in *Dragon Age II* than before.



The scourge of the Darkspawn is as widespread as ever in *DAII*.

IT STICKS IN THE THROAT

Flemeth to return for Dragon Age II

DID YOU CHOOSE to kill her? Did you let her live? Did you tell Morrigan the truth afterwards? How you chose to deal with Morrigan and her mother was a major plot arc in the first game and it's probably going to come back to haunt you in this sequel. Regardless of what you think you did with Flemeth we've seen her return in all her dragon-like ferocity. BioWare wouldn't be drawn on an explanation, but did reveal that both Flemeth and Morrigan would play a major part in the story of *Dragon Age II*. Even though you'll be playing as a new character it's clear that your previous choices will play a big role in how *Dragon Age II* pans out.

The improved visuals haven't stopped *DAII* from being as bloody as ever.

more involved by allowing them to react to events vocally as well as with action. A conversation wheel is now given to you rather than a list of responses and this offers a brief outline of what you'll say, much as you may have seen in *Mass Effect*. The one new addition to this technique of conversation directing is that at the centre of the wheel a symbol will appear for each choice giving you some indication of how it will affect the discussion. You may be aggressive or persuasive or perhaps charming. Each could have a different outcome and these symbols will give you some warning as to what that may be.

The events of the first game and the choices you made, as well as the relationships you built, will all have a bearing on the world you enter in *Dragon Age II* and will likely be spoken of by characters in the game, but with a fresh start you also get a fresh new world to explore with new areas of Thedas to explore that were not seen previously. The total map area for *Dragon Age II* is intimidating and several times larger than in *Origins*. New areas will likely mean new enemies as well as new allies, although key figures from *Origins* are set to have a big role.

The total map area for Dragon Age II is intimidating and several times larger than in Dragon Age: Origins

However, the real twist to *DAII* is what BioWare has described as a 'framed narrative'. The game will begin with a Dwarf named Varric and an Enchantress named Cassandra discussing your great deeds and how you become the Champion of Kirkwall. As such you are essentially playing flashbacks to these events, strung together as a tale told by the Dwarf. However, BioWare has warned us that Varric's intentions may not be entirely honest and that he may be twisting events and the telling of your tale to suit his own ends with Cassandra. This creates an interesting framework for your story, which may or may not be entirely true or could be misrepresented by the Dwarf to imply motivations that you did not have. What these two characters want from you as well as their relationship to you will be very interesting things to find out.

We've been impressed by what we've seen of *Dragon Age II* so far and with its new features, new characters and interesting story setup this could be very special.

Dragon Age II is being developed by BioWare. You can find out more from the series' website **dragonage.bioware.com**

Urban settings are also much more vibrant and detailed than the last game.

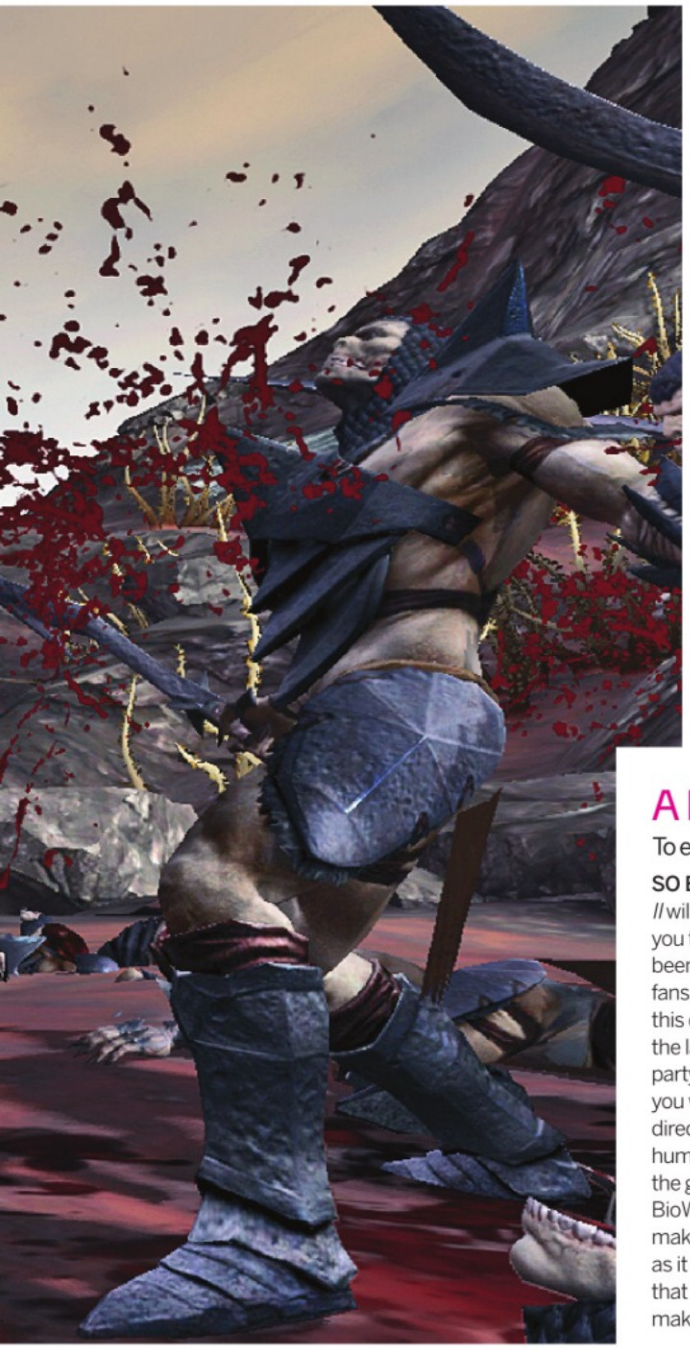
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Finally made with a console version in mind with optimised controls.
- Whole new areas of Thedas to explore and new adventures to find.
- Your choices in the first game will affect events in this sequel.
- A far smoother and better-looking game built with the latest tech.

READ ME

The story of *Dragon Age II* will span around ten years rather than the couple of years the previous story in *Origins* lasted.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

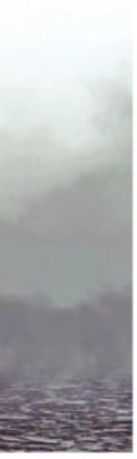


New finishing moves for all classes should make squad combat even better.

A RACIAL ISSUE

To err is human and so are you

SO BIOWARE HAS decided that *Dragon Age II* will only have a human lead character for you to direct through the story and this has been met by a lot of negative feeling from fans. Anyway, we're not too worried about this decision for two reasons. First, as with the last game you'll still be able to fill your party with characters from other races and you will be able to switch between them for direct control. So, your main hero may be human, but you don't play as one throughout the game. Second, this is clearly a move by BioWare to tighten up its storytelling and make the plot of *Dragon Age* more focused as it already is in *Mass Effect*. Given how that game developed between sequels that makes us even more excited about *DAII*.



Final Fantasy XIV is looking more impressive than we would have thought.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Final Fantasy XIV

PLAY developer Q&A

FFXIV producer Hiromichi Tanaka reveals all

PS3

What is the idea behind *Final Fantasy XIV*? What are you looking to achieve and what will the player experience be like?
There are two unique points to *Final Fantasy XIV*. The first is 'guildleve', a system that allows people to get rewards or learn certain skills in a short time, such as 30 minutes. So even if you are a solid player or part of a smaller group you can still manage your time efficiently and level up your character any way you like. We also have the armoury system, which allows players to change class by holding different equipment. They can learn abilities during this process and by combining different abilities you can customise and create your character. Also, because it's *Final Fantasy*, you can expect a huge storyline.

Can you tell us more about the different character classes and how they relate to *Final Fantasy* games that we already know?
This time there are four different categories; Disciples of War, Disciples of Magic, Disciples of Land and Disciples of Hand. Within each are many different classes. By changing your equipment you can customise your character, so there are several characters in the game. By learning different abilities you can make your own class and actually this time, we purposely decided not to use job names we used in previous *Final Fantasy* titles, so you really have to make sure you combine the exact skills you need to become say, a white mage in the future. So it really is up to you how you develop your character.

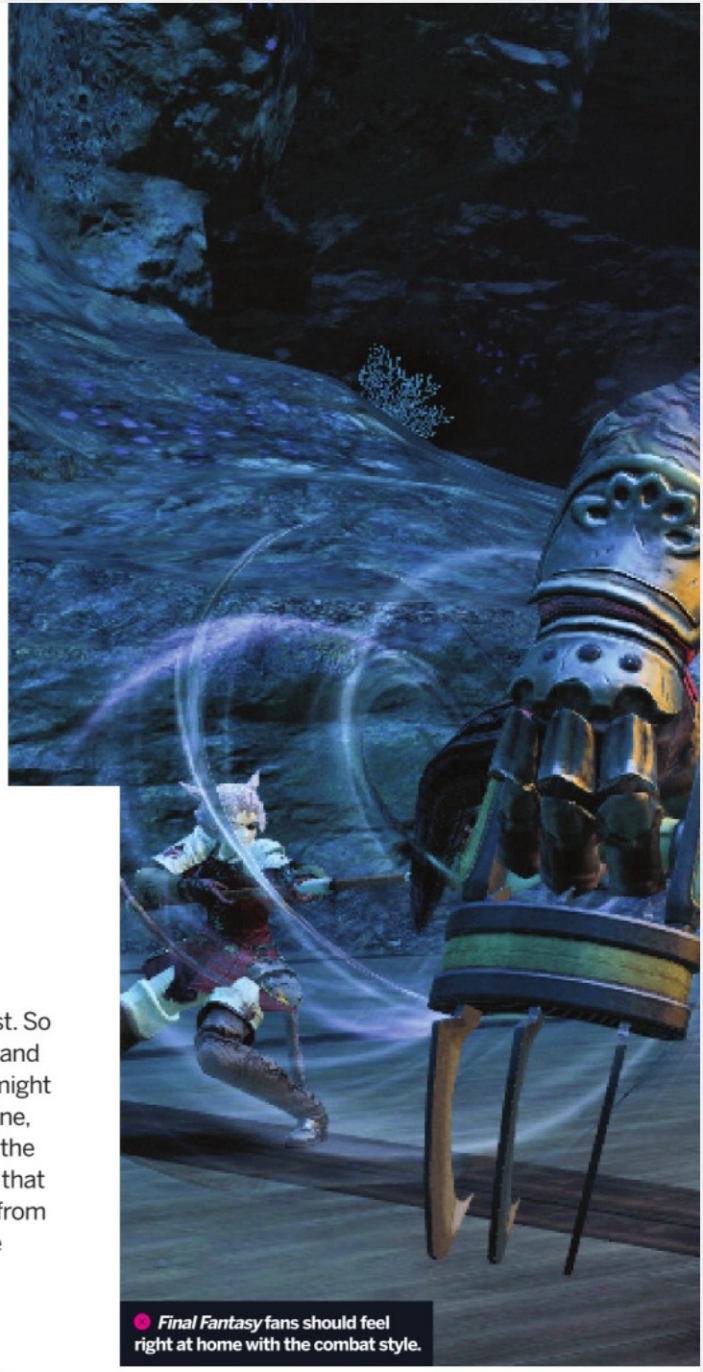
> In FFXIV you will be experiencing what happened in the past. By doing that you will discover the secrets of the world

You mentioned before an epic storyline running throughout the entire game. How have you made the player feel very much a part of that storyline and to still give them a sense of freedom?
The main idea is the same as the package titles of the *Final Fantasy* series. NPCs will be the key trigger of the game, so by talking to NPCs they will give you the storyline and you will experience it in this way. The key points of the *FFXIV* storyline are that you will be experiencing what happened in the past. By doing that you will discover the secrets of the world. If it's a package title, sometimes by following the story you can't do anything else, you just have to keep following the story. But because it's an MMO, you can stop the story at certain points when you like and try out a different quest. So you have much more freedom and also by trying the quests that might help you experience the storyline, the character will feel a part of the main story. We managed to do that as we have a lot of experience from *Final Fantasy XI* so we have the know-how to do that.

This is the second time the *Final Fantasy* series has gone into the online MMO space. How do you feel about the MMO genre?
I believe that MMOs are much more established now, however, it will evolve in the future, it will keep on changing as *Final Fantasy XI* did. Thanks to version updates, the game can change drastically, so there are a lot of possibilities for change.

What's the business model? Is it going to be subscription based?
It's going to be a 30 days subscription model and for the price we are currently unable to confirm, but we should be announcing more details shortly.

The latest **Final Fantasy** MMO remains an internal Square Enix matter. You can discover more at **www.finalfantasyxiv.com**



Final Fantasy fans should feel right at home with the combat style.

The job system has been completely revamped, but you'll still need the money.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- An epic world on a scale not even seen in the last *Final Fantasy*.
- The kind of freedom *FF* fans have been crying out for since *FFXIII*.
- A deep and rather complex class system that is very customisable.
- Exactly the kind of innovative combat systems that *FF* fans love.

READ ME

According to Tanaka, *Final Fantasy XIV* has been in development for around ten years, starting before *FFXI* came out.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

Arming yourself with different equipment is what modifies your class during the game.

OMG IT'S ONLINE

Final Fantasy fulfilling its online promise

FINAL FANTASY XI was the first Square Enix attempt at an MMO, but it looks like *Final Fantasy XIV* will be the one that really delivers on what in our minds that game would have been like. It's open, it's very customisable and it's bigger than we can currently get our head around. That's all good news.

We like to call this bringing out the big guns, although it's probably more of a satellite.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Fallout: New Vegas

Going all in on a sure thing

PLAY FAQ

PS3 This game is going to be brown, just like the last one.

Here you go again with all the doubting and the hating. *Fallout 3* has been one of the best games of this generation and *New Vegas* is following in its footsteps. Plus, it's set in Vegas, which is not exactly known for being a bland environment.

Doesn't seem very post-apocalyptic then.

Never happy are you? Well, New Vegas has miraculously managed to remain unscathed and offers a whole bunch of new challenges. This town is no less crazy or splintered than those in *Fallout 3*. You'll still be confronted with weird and wonderful characters. But beyond that are the deserts of the New Californian Republic, a region that will be familiar to older *Fallout* players from the first two games. That is a true wasteland.

But will I get to go in a casino?

Yes, of course. What's more the casinos of the Vegas strip are a major part of the game. The gambling houses of Las Vegas today are heavily guarded and not much has changed since the nuclear destruction of humanity. Getting weapons into a casino, for instance, is a big no-no, but that doesn't mean you can't find a way around it. There are merchants who can sell you concealable weapons that guards won't be able to find. Getting out of a casino having pulled a gun, on the other hand, might be another issue.

That sounds interesting, but is it all the same old weapons?

There's going to be some new ones, but one interesting new addition is the special attacks for melee weapons that Obsidian hopes will make close-quarters combat a little more interesting. It's also worked on the third-person camera so that such fighting can be made to look a little more interesting. It's much tighter on your character than in *Fallout 3*, so picking first or third person may not be as easy a decision as before.

Anything a little more... explosive?

Naturally. This wouldn't be a *Fallout* game without something that sets the world ablaze and the addition of the incendiary grenade is a good example. It may not sound all that special, but this grenade that sets enemies on fire can also throw them several feet into the air. Watching those Ghouls fly never gets boring.

Fallout: New Vegas is being developed by Obsidian Entertainment under the watchful eye of Bethesda. Find out more at **fallout.bethsoft.com**

You can now give your companions direct commands thanks to this wheel.

It will be interesting to see how much the NCR has changed since *Fallout 2*.

THIS IS THE END

Obsidian opts for the full stop in New Vegas

LIKE FALLOUT 3, *New Vegas* will have a definitive ending once you complete the story missions. That means that once you've completed the final mission there's no going back to explore and you'll have to start again or load up an old save game. That wasn't too popular in the last game and Bethesda ended up adding an open ending with some DLC that tacked onto the end of the game. We expect something similar to happen again.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A vibrant new location at the centre of another huge wasteland to be explored.
- A refined and improved experience that builds on the outstanding *Fallout 3*.
- A welcome return to the place where *Fallout* began, out on the west coast.
- A completely new story that will apparently link to the older games.

READ ME

Your character, The Courier, must work between three warring factions, the New Californian Republic, the people of New Vegas and slavers.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

It's been a long time since we last saw Aya.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

The 3rd Birthday

A parasite for sore eyes

PSP

Picking up where *Parasite Eve* left off some time ago, *The 3rd Birthday* is essentially an attempt by Square Enix to reignite the story of Aya Brea on the PSP (with talk of it coming to consoles later). On this occasion rather than an RPG or straight survival-horror game, which the first two games tried out, *The 3rd Birthday* will be a third-person shooter with some horror elements.

The addition of an 'Overdrive' mechanic that allows you to take direct control of NPCs in a firefight (kind of like some sort of astral projection where you

see Aya take the place of New York Police Department shooters) promises to be an interesting addition to the game. Keeping these characters alive will apparently be an important part of the game, which may seem like no bother, but the monsters are huge. Anyway, it's good to see Aya return.

RPG

Valkyria Chronicles should be a good fit with the PSP.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Valkyria Chronicles II

Tactical RPG warfare in your pocket

PSP

While many fans may still be a little upset that this sequel isn't hitting the PlayStation 3, the idea of *Valkyria Chronicles II* coming to PSP has always excited us. This brilliant RPG is one of those titles that could make a really successful leap to the handheld. After *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker* we could really do with some hardcore gaming distractions and this fits the bill perfectly.

Some of the flashier graphical features and menu displays have been removed, but *Valkyria Chronicles* on PSP is more or less the same game in

terms of mechanics and gameplay as its bigger PS3 cousin. The fact that it is now mobile, though, is ultimately the thing that really makes it stand out. We fully expect this to be yet another great example of the kind of games that only the PSP offers.

What could be better than creating your own superhero?

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

DC Universe Online

A merry band of a million heroes

PS3

The way in which the PS3 is embracing the MMO in the coming year is an exciting new region for the console that puts it another one up on its competitors, but being an online RPG alone isn't enough to get success. *World Of Warcraft* continues to dominate the PC market even with other great games coming and going. Getting the game right and the deal for gamers right is important.

Sony will be hoping that the quiet success of games like *City Of Heroes*, with which *DC Universe* is obviously similar, will carry over to consoles. You'll

play as your own created hero, levelling up your abilities and unlocking costume pieces as you go, meeting DC heroes and villains alike in the various cities of DC's world. This game promises a great deal more than just fan service for DC fanatics. It should be something special.

Obsidian is taking the reins of another classic RPG.

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2011

Dungeon Siege III

If it ain't broke and all that

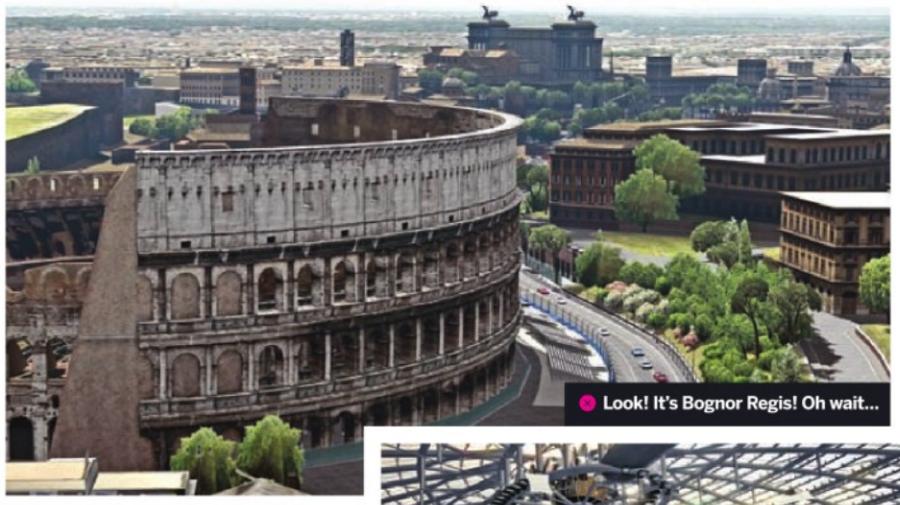
PS3

Fitting rather snugly into the fantasy RPG pigeonhole comes a classic of the genre coming from Obsidian Entertainment, the company so many turn to when they want a strong RPG team to expand a licence a little further. It's bizarre how many times Obsidian is found in this position, from *Knights Of The Old Republic* to *Fallout: New Vegas*. Now *Dungeon Siege* is getting some love and it's coming to PS3.

For those of you who don't know, *Dungeon Siege* is a classic in fantasy

RPG terms with all the swords, sorcery and stat managing fans would expect. It's all displayed in a more or less isometric view, typical of these games, that you will have experienced if you played *Dragon Age*. Anyway, it's looking pretty good and should be an interesting new addition to your PS3 collection.

You can take your Corvette online, if you want.


Look! It's Bognor Regis! Oh wait...

Ah, the wily old Dodge Charger. You'll get about 20 miles per gallon in that.

This may look dull, but it's the *Top Gear* test track and so it is thrilling.

BORED OF WAITING?

This is why you should still care

THE WAIT IS now down to about three months, and after waiting just under five years for a new, proper *GT* title this doesn't seem like very long at all. With the pedigree the series has we're expecting big things from this version: *GT* **Play** 31 97%, *GT2* **Play** 59 92%, *GT3* **Play** 79 91%, *GT4* **Play** 126 96%, *GT* PSP **Play** 184 85%. See?

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Gran Turismo 5

Almost there... almooost there...

PS3

So not only are you still talking about *GT5*, but you're also still wheeling out these daft FAQ things?
Yes. But wait! We have some information. It's all coming to the fore now the game is actually relatively close to release.

Okay then. Explain these new 'things' you know.
Well various nuggets popped up post-E3, with the likes of stunt tracks and go-karting mentioned. What has us most interested, however, is the inclusion of a track creator – something rumoured for around a year now, but seemingly confirmed by SCE Worldwide Studios president Shuhei Yoshida when talking to the PlayStation Blog. Sony hasn't officially announced there will be a track creator in *GT5* yet, but let's put it this way: *we have a feeling in our waters*. We also know that 3D has been in the works for a couple of years now, at least according to Kazunori Yamauchi. And he should know. This gives us hope that the feature won't be hastily crowbarred in and it comes as some relief to hear 3D implementation wasn't the cause of the game's most recent delay – though that in itself raises a few more questions of its own.

So what have we got on our list so far then? Do you think they have enough features in the game?
We do. We really do. It's no small matter it's taken Polyphony so long to craft *GT5* – it is a developer who truly puts its heart and soul into the game. This is evidenced by the things we knew about before: the 1,000 or so cars (with 200 perfectly modelled 'premium' vehicles); the 70-plus track variations; the dynamic weather effects; the genuinely impressive night/day transitions; the physical damage modelling (though it looks as if this won't affect a car's performance); the *Top Gear* test track; uploading videos to YouTube (potentially in HD); online multiplayer; the fact that we still salivate every time we see new screens. The list could go on, but we only have so much space.

Is there anything else?
Not right now, but we've been told we'll get more details as we approach *GT5*'s eventual release. Rest assured we'll be on the phone to Sony (nearly) every day.

Gran Turismo 5 is being developed by Polyphony Digital. Check out **www.gran-turismo.com** for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Every new feature we've seen and heard about looks genuinely interesting.
- 3D looks to be properly implemented, not crowbarred in.
- Still, still, still, still, still, still incredibly pretty. Still.
- Every single game that takes ages to come out is great, right? Right?

READ ME

This is what happens if you take 1998's original game, spend five years making it for the most powerful console available and spend $60 million on it.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

We all clearly have cars like this.

Fast cars, open spaces: it's definitely *Hot Pursuit*.

The police are as well equipped as the racers.

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit

Criterion goes in pursuit of driving excellence

PS3

Criterion's take on the *Need For Speed* franchise has already wowed us with its cat-and-mouse sensibilities but now the dust has settled after E3, what does *Hot Pursuit* have in store for us? Why does it matter that there's yet another game in a series home to 15 other titles (ignoring a couple of spin-offs)? Let's see...

The mode we've seen – Interceptor – is focused on police chases and is single-minded, offering the chase from the perspective of the chaser or the chasee. What this means is a tense, heart-pounding pursuit or escape involving you and a friend, or friends, or just the AI, and employing all manner of gadgets and weapons to keep things interesting – or 'fair'. Radar jammers, spike strips, handbrake turns, nitro boosts and many other delightful little bits and bobs can be employed by both sides of the law to gain a victory. Police win by inflicting enough damage, the pursued win by escaping the coppers' radars. The fact the track is open-ended and the game veers more towards arcade than sim can make for some thrilling chases and we hope to see *Hot Pursuit* becoming the multiplayer mainstay the original was 12 years ago.

Every time we hear something new about *Hot Pursuit* we get a little tingly feeling. The original *HP* was a great game and a standout of the PSone's racing catalogue, so it could just be the name bringing about these feelings. On the other hand, Criterion *is* involved. We'll leave it up to you to decide why you should be excited.

Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit is being developed by Criterion. Check out **www.criteriongames.com/NFS/** for details.

Well that's just a ridiculous car.

Police chases take centre stage. This is a good thing.

INFLUENCES

Wear them on your sleeve

WHEN TALKING ABOUT the thinking behind the new version of *Hot Pursuit*, it makes us happy to see Criterion skipping over the recent 'street' entries to the series and instead going to... well, *Hot Pursuit*. The first three games are set to be the biggest influences on this latest entry, bringing back the liberating feeling of escaping the police on a wide, beautiful stretch of road.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Taking it back to what made *Need For Speed* great in the first place...
- ...while bringing in one of the best arcade-racing developers around.
- It's got plenty of online game modes that give it extra longevity.
- Oh, and you can be the police, too, which is always good fun.

READ ME

Every single *Need For Speed* game released has come to a PlayStation platform. Well, except for two, and one of those was *NFS: Nitro* on Wii, which was pump.

You will have to watch out for all manner of obstaOH CRAP A WRECKING BALL!

This is concept art, though you do get the general idea (or 'concept').

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

MotorStorm: Apocalypse

Chaos in three dimensions

PS3

Something we weren't privy to when we went to play *MotorStorm: Apocalypse* in June was the 3D element. In fact, Sony and Evolution Studios were being so secretive that we weren't even sure if there was 3D compatibility in the game.

But obviously there is – it's a Sony title, meaning it's pushing the 'Play, Create, Share' thing as well as 3D integration. We had a delivery of the game's demo and a lovely new 3DTV for the office, so we could sit down and play it on our own time, which is always good.

Just as we said before, the game itself is great fun – fast-paced, intense and like the *MotorStorm* we all know and love (except in a city). But we're not here to talk about that today – it's 3D opini-time. It works better than what we saw for *Killzone 3*, and feels genuinely as if it's been made *for* the game, rather than tacked-on. Debris, pedestrians and other vehicles fly out towards your head and it manages to feel that bit more intense as a result. There are issues – the cars seem lighter than we're used to, and 3D really doesn't add anything major to the experience of the actual game.

But these are early days and this is an evolving technology – and what we played made us go 'wow' more than it made us go 'boo'.

MotorStorm: Apocalypse is being developed by Evolution Studios. Check out **www.motorstorm.com** for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- 3D hasn't been tacked-on – it's been in *Apocalypse* for ages now.
- If the emphasis stays on the game not the tech, it's going to be a fine addition to the experience.
- Some have claimed it worked better than *Killzone*'s 3D outing.
- As with the other *MotorStorm* games, it's bloody great fun to play.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Test Drive Unlimited 2

And nary a Vengabus in sight

It's an interesting element, but we're worried how much coverage the social aspect of *TDU 2* is getting.

PS3

Test Drive Unlimited 2 may have been lost in the hubbub at E3 in June, with many other titles overshadowing Eden's latest addition to the… sigh… MOOR genre. But we managed to get some impressions on the game and the signs are positive – it's definitely not dropped off our 'we're quite interested in that' list.

The official car list hasn't been finalised, but so far we've seen Aston Martins, Dodge Vipers, Audi TTs, the wonderful Ford GT, the insane Pagani Zonda and the even-more-mental Gumpert Apollo is apparently making an appearance. While there's definite focus on the social and lifestyle aspects of *Test Drive Unlimited 2*, at least the cars aren't being forgotten about.

We said in our preview in issue 193 that Eden really is trying to cover all the bases with *TDU 2*. We weren't exaggerating, as evidenced by a mode that allows you to play as a passenger while another player drives. It doesn't strike us as particularly invigorating, to sit next to someone while reading a map, but it could prove a fun little distraction. There have also been rumblings of a police chase mode from those involved in the game.

It does make us excited and we are looking forward to getting lost in Ibiza with *TDU 2*, but we're still just a bit worried that Eden may be over-stretching itself. Let's hope not, though.

Test Drive Unlimited 2 is being developed by Eden Games. Check out **www.testdriveunlimited2.com** for more details.

Races can be created on the fly, just like before.

This is a game that caters to the vain.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's got a little something to keep just about everyone entertained.
- The massive space of both Ibiza and the original *TDU* island of Oahu.
- The attention to detail on the cars could give *GT5* a run for its money.
- It includes a car that could theoretically drive upside down on the roof of a tunnel.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

Police chases will likely see you on both sides, working undercover as you do.

Multiplayer offers a fun experience, but shouldn't make up the meat of the game.

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

Driver: San Francisco

Insert Quantum Leap reference here

PS3

And so it came to be that not long after we went and saw *Driver: San Francisco* the game went and made its first public appearance at E3. But what did we learn in the meantime? Not much, truth be told, though we did get confirmation from Martin Edmondson that the replay editing/director mode *would* be in the game. Even though when we asked him about that – *to his face* – he said he couldn't tell us. The blighter. Maybe he was suffering some kind of Swiss cheese memory loss like that Doctor Samuel Beckett suffers from in the popular early-Nineties TV series *Quantum Leap*.

Even if he wasn't, it certainly looks like Sam's influence has been felt on the latest *Driver* game, and the more we see of *Driver: San Francisco* the more we want to go and re-watch Sam leaping around the world, Al smoking those delightful cigars and Ziggy telling them there's a 98 per cent chance they're here to *save that woman*.

> The more we see of Driver: San Francisco the more we want to go and re-watch Quantum Leap

It is a rather confusing one, though, as for every person who tells us that *Driver: San Francisco* has been influenced by the likes of *Quantum Leap* we just have to go back to our interview with Edmondson where he told us "we've actually tried very hard to stay away from sci-fi as such". It's almost as confusing as the time Sam leapt into Al's body.

Driver: San Francisco is being developed by Ubisoft Reflections. Check out **www.driver-game.com** for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- *Driver: San Francisco*'s driving physics are rather impressive.
- Much as we may laugh in its direction, Shifting is a good feature.
- The replay editor + possible YouTube functionality = yay!
- You may well get to 'make right what once went wrong'.

Everything *Twisted Metal* is about: summed up.

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

Twisted Metal

Summed up in one sentence

PS3

The rebirth of one of **Play**'s favourite games (that no one else seems to like) has us all very happy, and a couple of nuggets of information have popped up – one definitely of a positive nature and one of a less positive, though possibly quite good (depending on how you feel) nature: the game will see a beta release at some point, as Tweeted by creator David Jaffe; and the new *Twisted Metal* will not support either 3D or Sony's upcoming Move control scheme – the former because it does not run at a solid 60 frames per second and the latter because (again, as Jaffe himself pointed out on the social networking uber-site) there really isn't very much point.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

F1 2010

Not competing with GT5, apparently

PS3

Codemasters has very high hopes for its upcoming Formula 1 title, and any fears it will be left stuck in the shadows of *Gran Turismo 5* have been shot down by the developer. Hopeful for 1.5 to 2 million sales, the legendary Warwickshire-based developer is confident that the marketplace won't be too busy for fans of the sport where the cars should really just be aeroplanes. Formula 1 is quite a popular genre for purists, so it makes a lot of sense for Codemasters to think like this.

Weather should have a huge effect on races.

Safe to say the game will be everything we have come to expect from an *F1* title, just with the added bonus of it having a different spin put on it for the first time in years. New *and* fresh? Maybe.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

FIFA 11

Like FIFA 10, only 'plus'

PLAY FAQ

PS3

The *FIFA* series is made up of 49 games, including the *Street* series, international competition titles, a few spin-offs and the management games. Why should I care about the 50th game in the series?

Because *FIFA 09* was the best version of the game ever made, and *FIFA 10* improved on it. *FIFA 11*, therefore, should be the pinnacle – at least until next year's version. Barring any major missteps or EA Sports dropping the ball and with the improvements to individual player skills through the Personality+ system, this should be the best *FIFA* game ever made. That's why you should care. Unless you don't like football, in which case you can move along.

You make a good point. But will EA sort out Manager mode this time around? It was a bit of a mess last year, after all.

We have heard that this particular mode is getting a fair bit of attention, so hopefully there won't be any game-breaking bugs. Having said that, we were told last year's Manager mode would be vastly improved, so we're waiting until we've played it before we get *really* hopeful.

So as it's one of these 'new games' I hear so much about, I assume it will take advantage of Move and 3D technology?

Afraid not. We did expect at least a Move option, but right now it doesn't look like EA Sports wants to go down that route. Frankly, it comes as a relief – it means the focus will be entirely on making *FIFA 11* the best it can be, rather than relying on input mechanic gimmickry. As for no 3D? Well, we are quite surprised by that, as it seemed like it would be a good fit. Oh well.

Anything else?

Not really, aside from the usual bells and whistles we've come to expect from EA Sports franchises. It will look nicer, there will probably be new elements to Arena mode and licensed music is sure to make an appearance. You heard it here first.

FIFA 11 is being developed by EA Canada. Dribble over to **www.fifa.easports.com** to score more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's a football game. Football is great.
- We can add our own chants, which will likely be full of hilarious puns.
- No gimmicky control schemes to contend with.
- Personality+, away from the press gumph, could be a nifty feature.

READ ME

Wayne Rooney has been *FIFA*'s cover star since *FIFA 06*. No word if he'll be present again, given his performance in the World Cup.

PERSONALITEE-HEE

What's Mido's like?

PERSONALITY+ IS BEING touted so much it's hard to ignore – we had a bit of a look at it last month. But we're still no closer to knowing how much of an effect it will actually have on a game. Will pace still be the dominant stat? Will slow, powerful players actually be useful for once? We shall see.

This has got our mouths watering for the start of the new Premier League season.

He looks very worried about that tackle.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

PES 2011

Rebuilt or just better groomed?

Tiny Leo, out-climbing the woeful Italians. Just like in real life. Ahem.

PS3

We went over the major new additions to the latest in the *Pro Evolution Soccer* series back in issue 193, but there are still a few details floating about we haven't been able to dissect with our burning, critical gaze. So let's do that now. We've heard a bit about new animation and the like, but we were quite surprised to hear that – apparently – there are 1,000 new animations in the game that have been built from scratch. While this doesn't have any massive impact on the game, it does show that at the very least we can start moving away from one of *PES*'s main problems – that it's stuck so resolutely in the past. An update of this kind on its own means little, but combined with the other promises thrown our way it gives us hope for the newest entry to the series.

Elsewhere there are elements that have no effect, such as custom soundtracks, and those that bring some necessary change, though only to a small element of the game, like the revamped 'drag and drop' tactics modification. Beyond this we just have to play the waiting game and hope that, unlike in previous years, *PES 2011* can hold its head high when stood side by side with *FIFA*. Though having said that, we're not quite ready to believe it can relive the glory days – prove us wrong, Konami.

PES 2011 is being developed by KCE Tokyo. Check out **www.konami-europe.com** for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- *PES* has to step up its game to compete with *FIFA*. Hopefully it can.
- Tweaks, touches and additions can make a decent game great.
- Having Lionel Messi as your cover star isn't that bad.
- The loss of Mark Lawrenson is brilliant, though it's a shame he's been replaced with Jim Beglin.

Expect the typical *Madden* improvements.

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST

Madden NFL 11

Now with added additions

PS3

As we (rather confusingly) witnessed at this year's E3, the most recent *Madden* game is pushing accessibility while at the same time trying to retain all the depth that has kept fans so interested in the franchise over the years. EA is approaching this through a few buzz-wordy features such as GameFlow – which allows for 'situational' plays to be called by the coach on the sideline – as well as by simply claiming *Madden NFL 11* will be quicker, will sound better and will use less buttons for more moves.

We have absolutely no idea at the time of writing how this will all turn out, but by the time this issue is out in the shops the demo should have been released so you will all know for yourselves anyway.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Shaun White Skateboarding

A colourful alternative

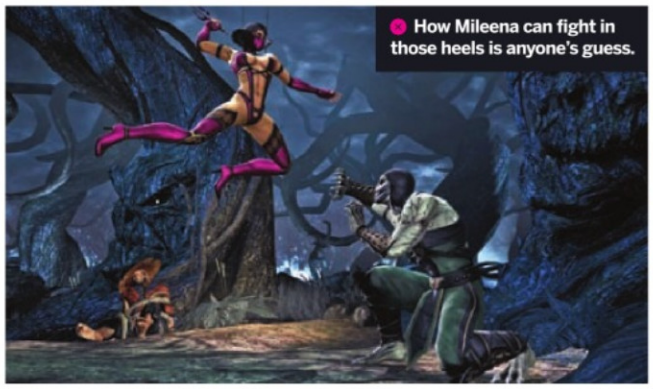
PS3

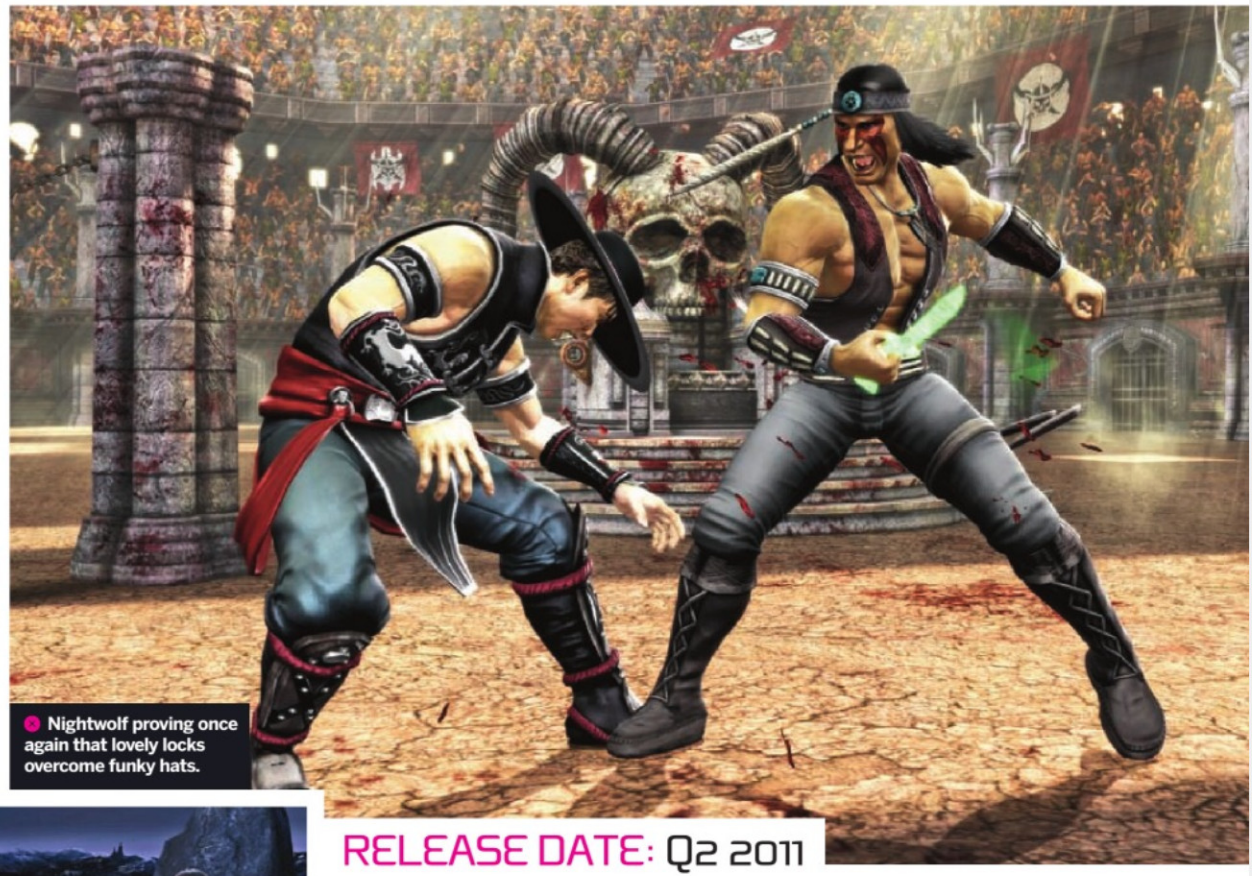
This is a fun one, as a lot of people seem to have popped up on the internet to 'correct' us, saying that we clearly must mean 'Snowboarding'. We don't. The guy with the lovely ginger locks has been a skater for a long time now and has the awards to back it up – soon enough he'll have a game, too.

Shaun White Skateboarding brings elements of *Okami* and *Flower* to the skate genre – yes, *Okami* and *Flower* – in that the player brings colour, vibrancy and life to the city by tricking their way around it. It sounds interesting, and that's the first time we've been able to say that about a skateboarding game in quite a while, truth be told.

Grind to bring back the colour. Or something.

Yep, that's definitely quite bloody.


How Mileena can fight in those heels is anyone's guess.


Nightwolf proving once again that lovely locks overcome funky hats.

We feel another game logic + clichés column coming up here...

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2011

Mortal Kombat

Losing a dimension, gaining a dimension

PS3

Mortal Kombat was always going to come back, wasn't it? We never had any doubt about it. At the same time, we didn't actually think we'd be as interested in the ninth game in the series as we actually are. It just goes to show that all you have to do to get **Play**'s attention is make a trailer where someone gets their face vomited off by acid. Simple economics.

> One feature that surprised us was the inclusion of 3D in the PS3 version of the game

This new *Mortal Kombat* returns to a 2D plane for battles, with no more endlessly circling opponents or manoeuvres that operate in the third dimension. This is classic *Mortal Kombat* action befitting the game's setting and sure to make the game more appealing to those who lost interest in the series post-*Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3*. Continuing on this theme, NetherRealm Studios has informed us *Mortal Kombat* will be set during the events of *MK1* through *MK3*, telling a revised history of the events that took place in this time. This means we'll see old faces and classic levels alongside some newness and the odd change here and there – for example, we might be seeing a character become a robotic ninja who wasn't of the mechanical persuasion in the original timeline. Ah, *Mortal Kombat*.

Of course, violence is a big thing with *Mortal Kombat* and Ed Boon, co-creator of the series, is keen to point out they are aiming for a Mature rating when the game is released next year – so no more of this PG crap like in *MK Vs DC*.

One feature that popped up and surprised us was the inclusion of 3D in the PS3 version of the game. While it's unlikely to affect how things play out in a general sense, we are more than a little curious to see what 3D Fatalities are like. Acid vomiting? In 3D? Sign us (or: 'our immature, violence-loving sides') up.

Mortal Kombat is being developed by NetherRealm Studios. Check out **www.themortalkombat.com** for more details.

ENTERING OUTWORLD

Or: "playing MK online"

WHILE FEW DETAILS have been forthcoming as of yet, we have been told to expect a robust and full-featured online portion for *Mortal Kombat*. DLC will make its way in due course and – while not finalised – could feature anything from new characters and costumes through to new movesets, levels and Fatalities. Which all sounds very nice.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- The series has been all over the place recently – this could put it back on track.
- Genuinely rather brutal Fatalities are sure to raise a smirk.
- No mucking about with 3D planes – this is pure, classic, 2D fighting.
- Fortunately we don't have to deal with the rubbish newer characters.

READ ME

Confirmed playable characters currently include Raiden, Reptile, Kung Lao, Johnny Cage, Sektor, Nightwolf, Sub-Zero and Scorpion.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

Yes, Deadpool's in it. You can all shut up now.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2011

Marvel Vs Capcom 3: Fate Of Two Worlds

Gonna take you for a ride

PS3

Ten years after it first came out on Dreamcast, we finally get a sequel to *Marvel Vs Capcom 2*. Those worrying time hasn't been kind to this one-on-one brawling great can rest easy, as what we've seen of *MVC 3* has been nothing short of 'really bloody amazing'. Visually arresting, looking very much like a comic in motion and with the same simple-yet-deep mechanics we were so used to all those years ago, this really is one to look forward to.

We'll know more soon as Capcom is set to reveal more at Comic-Con in San Diego. Will Barry Burton be revealed as a playable character? Fingers crossed.

MMA will be hoping to give *UFC Undisputed* a good beating.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

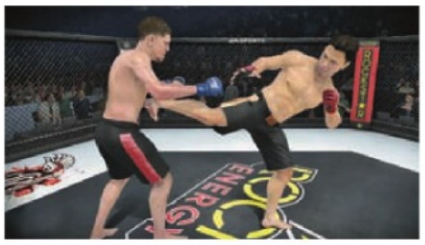
EA Sports MMA

Hot man-punching action

PS3

Those of you who missed the mention of *EA Sports MMA* back at E3 will probably have missed the news about the Live Broadcast system. This lets players record their own hype videos, pump up the rest of the world about their matches and take part in 'televised' matches online, with analysis offered by the pros. Frankly, it sounds like brilliant fun – even if we currently have no idea how or if it will work.

Other than that things are pretty standard for the battering simulator:



wars of words between THQ and EA, Fedor Emelianenko still looking like a sad panda (who could punch your face off) and we've still been unable to carry out a direct comparison between *MMA* and *UFC Undisputed*.

Looks like The Rock *can* see Cena.

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

WWE All Stars

Look! It's something different!

PS3

While *SmackDown Vs Raw 11* looks set to follow the same old familiar formula, THQ took us by surprise with the announcement of an all-new entry for the WWE catalogue. *All Stars* takes things to an arcade style of play, away from the 'sim' of *SmackDown Vs Raw* and into a whole new world of deformed wrestlers who look even more like cartoon characters than they do in real life.

So far John Cena and The Rock have been revealed as two of the grapplers taking part in the combo-heavy, super-

move-laden title but many more legends have been promised. As such it gives us hope THQ is opting for a mix of the old and new ('All Stars' would be a clue to that effect). We're really looking forward to this one.

Randy Orton also acts as a brilliant diving board.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011

Now with chair throwing!

PS3

For years now wrestling fans have been calling for an overhaul of the *SmackDown* engine but with the developer Yuke's busy with projects like *UFC* it doesn't seem likely to happen any time soon.

Instead, what we've been promised are dynamic physics on objects, the ability to throw chairs and the chance to prop up ladders on the ropes.

We'll also be getting a new TLC match that promises to be less infuriating than other incarnations of this type of bout.

We've seen the likes of The Undertaker, Jericho and The Miz in action already but we're sure there's a lot more to come in the run-up to release. Well, we hope so anyway.

Never before in the history of rock has it been important for the keyboard player to be in shot.

It's not good grimacing like that, your always going to look a bit of a plum playing a keyboard.

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Rock Band 3

Keep on rocking in the 3 world

PS3

Oh, a new music game. Woop-dee-doo...
Jaded are we? Well, yeah, we suppose there's no point pretending that the peak of the music game boom hasn't now been and gone, and that it's been a while since anyone introduced any new ideas that actually made a significant, positive difference. But Harmonix is still working at it.

Really? What now then? Tour bus racing? Tantrum mode? Or maybe some kind of sordid new groupie peripheral?
No. There are really no gimmicks in *Rock Band 3*. Harmonix is still focused on expanding *Rock Band* as a platform for enjoying music. For example, you really can use it to learn real guitar now.

That's not the first time I've heard that. Every plastic-shredding guitar loser thinks they can play real guitar, just because they can play *Welcome To The Jungle* on Expert mode...
Well, they have the opportunity to prove it (or not) with the new Pro Guitar mode. This mode requires either one of the two new guitar controllers – whether that be the Fender Mustang from Mad Catz, which has 102 fret buttons and six 'strings' at the strumming end, or Harmonix's own Squier Fender Stratocaster, which is a real guitar that also functions as a game controller – and involves reading proper guitar notation.

What about the rest of the band?
Well, there's been a Pro Drums mode since *Rock Band 2*, singing really is singing anyway, so it doesn't actually need a Pro mode and the new keyboard peripheral is much like a real keyboard, so it has a Pro mode, too.

Singing is singing? You can do better than that...
Well, the three-part harmonies introduced in *The Beatles: Rock Band* will also feature in the main *Rock Band* series for the first time, bringing the potential maximum members in your band to a whopping seven.

I'm unlikely to find seven people who are all good at *Rock Band*. What can I do if my band sucks?
You can just play for fun. Harmonix isn't just adding features for the budding musician, it's also throwing in some new party modes for those of us who see *Rock Band* as a purely social experience. We haven't seen any of these in action, but they sound similar to some of the things introduced in *Guitar Hero 5*. No silly gimmicks, it's just easier for people to drop in and out and just have fun with it without worrying about scoring or meeting challenges.

Rock Band 3 is being developed by Harmonix. Check the website for more details: www.harmonixmusic.com

This guy's just scored a victory on Knobbly Knees Contest mode. Not really.

KEYTAR HERO

The Eighties rears its ugly head

THE KEYBOARD CONTROLLER *can* be fitted with a strap and played like a keytar, but it *should not*. The keytar is one of the worst things ever created, worse even than mullets. If you play *Rock Band* keytar you deserve to have no friends and will die unhappy and alone. With a keytar embedded in your skull probably.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- You can actually learn how to play real guitar now apparently.
- It's got a new keyboard peripheral, if that's what you really want.
- Now with new party modes for the more sociable rocker.
- It's got Ronnie James Dio in it, rest his immortal metal soul.

READ ME

Latest iteration of the original full band game – or 'platform for music', if you want to be fancy. Now with keyboards!

www.imagineshop.co.uk

That's the real David Bowie, not some in-game caricature. Hard to tell with him, though, isn't it?

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

SingStar Guitar

No longer just a vocal minority

PS3

Perhaps the only really surprising thing about the announcement of *SingStar Guitar* is that it didn't happen sooner. As soon as *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero* started stepping on *SingStar*'s toes, you'd think *SingStar* might've started stamping right back straight away, but it's actually taken a while. Anyway, here it is, and it's the usual *SingStar* formula only with guitar parts bolted on. No drums, though, so we're not really seeing a competitive edge here. Unless you really, really prefer having the

song's own promo video running in the background over game graphics. In case you're wondering, there are no plans to market *SingStar* guitar peripherals, but the game will support any and all *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* axes.

This looks more like *Thriller* than *Guitar Hero*.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

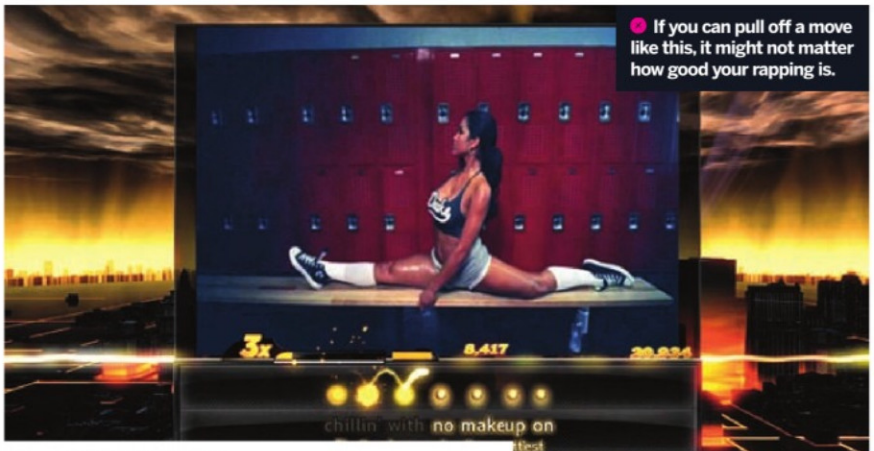
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock

This means war

PS3

Neversoft's Brian Bright recently stated that *Guitar Hero* lost its 'soul' in its last couple of iterations and we reckon that's a pretty good way of putting it. *Guitar Hero: World Tour* and *Guitar Hero 5* were decent enough games, but they didn't really embrace the spirit of rock in the way the series did at its inception. Music games aren't just for rockers, of course, but with the marketplace becoming increasingly crowded, attempting to

please everyone in just one game just wasn't making sense. So now we have *Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock*, which really put the heroism, and the villainy, back into *Guitar Hero* with a tongue-in-cheek Quest mode.



If you can pull off a move like this, it might not matter how good your rapping is.

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

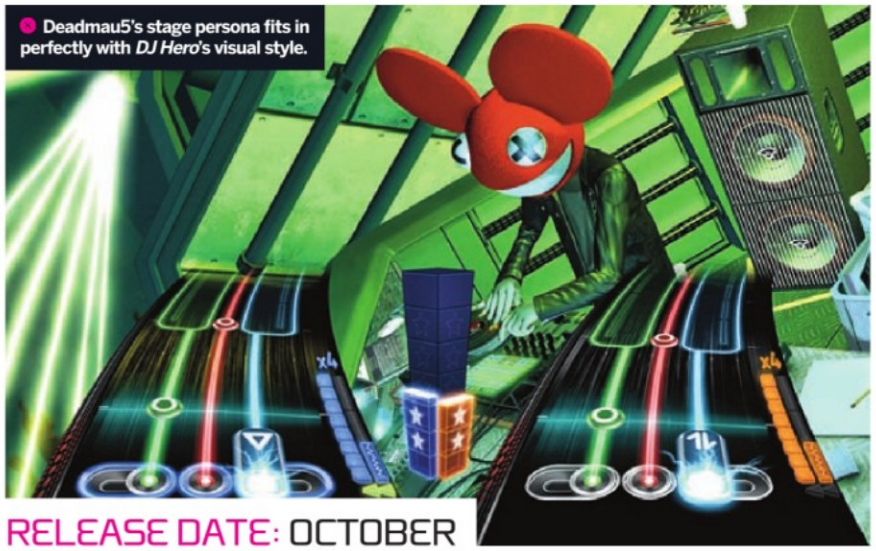
Def Jam Rapstar

Not to be confused with blind marmalade

PS3

Is it basically like *SingStar* but with rapping? Well, fundamentally, yes it is. But *Rapstar* has a set of its own features that serve to set it apart from the increasingly bloated music game pack. The most intriguing of these is the rap battles feature, whereby players compete online not for score, but for votes from the game's community. The idea is that, using the PlayStation Eye, you take a video of yourself rapping the track of your choice then edit it, adding some effects from the selection the game

offers if you wish, post it on the game's servers and challenge a rival to post a video of themselves performing the same tune. The community and not the game's scoring system, then decides who wins.



Deadmau5's stage persona fits in perfectly with *DJ Hero*'s visual style.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

DJ Hero 2

Turning the tables

PS3

Who wants to hear a myth? Okay... ready... here it is... *DJ Hero* sold poorly. You hear that quite a lot, but it simply isn't true. *DJ Hero* sold about 2 million units. Admittedly, it didn't sell as well as any of the main *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band* games, and it didn't top any charts, but so what? A couple of million multiplied by whatever the mark-up is on those decks (significantly more than on a regular game, we would imagine) is a pretty healthy profit. So contrary to popular belief, FreeStyleGames isn't

under any great pressure to turn things around with this sequel. It's just going to keep doing what it does, only with bigger acts, better multiplayer, proper vocal support and a big helmet in the shape of a cartoon mouse.

Shank

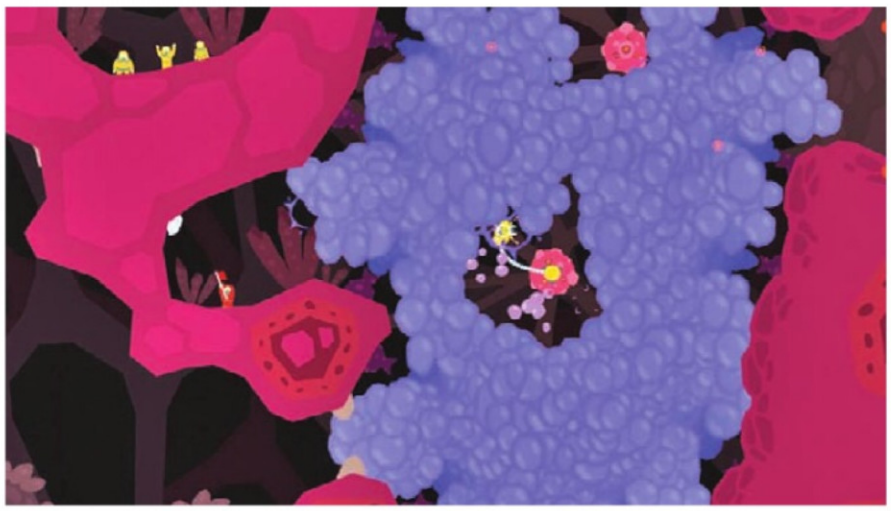
Publisher: EA **Developer:** Klei Entertainment **ETA:** Q3 2010

Shank is still bloody and beautiful. What we've been able to play of the game indicates it will indeed be quite a laugh, but there's no telling how the experience will stretch out as things progress. Flowing, free combat involving shooting and melee combat is the name of the game, comboing to your heart's content. This is one to look forward to.

Sonic 4: Episode 1

Publisher: Sega **Developer:** Dimps/Sonic Team **ETA:** Late 2010

We sat down with *Sonic 4* recently and we're happy to report it is a 'proper' *Sonic* game. You run from right to left, you collect rings, it goes fast and the music is great. Retro touches sit alongside the modern, 2.5D presentation and the addition of time attack and score attack modes should lend some longevity to what is a great-looking package.



PixelJunk Shooter 2

Publisher: Q-Games **Developer:** SCEE **ETA:** Late 2010

The first time a major *PixelJunk* game receives a sequel is obviously cause for celebration. *PixelJunk Shooter 2* will bring with it new elements to toy with and terrain to deform, head-to-head online play, the ability to download ghost runs of other players to try to better their times and lots of other things that make us warm inside.

Blade Kitten

Publisher: Atari **Developer:** Krome Studios **ETA:** September

Blade Kitten is a 2D platformer based on a webcomic. There are some promising intentions behind the game, with a unique control system, a fully fledged combat system and some lovely looks. It stands out in the crowd of upcoming PSN titles, but we'll still have to wait and see if the game is any good.

Rush'N Attack: Ex-Patriot

Publisher: Konami **Developer:** Vatra Games **ETA:** Q4 2010

Another retro classic sequel coming to PSN, Konami's *Rush'N Attack: Ex-Patriot* sees players taking control of a lone soldier as he rushes through a lot of Russians, attacking them. Rather than the all-out run-'n'-gun nonsense you may be expecting, *Ex-Patriot* also involves some stealth and strategy. It looks very nice, too.

Alien Breed: Impact

Publisher: TBC **Developer:** Team17 **ETA:** Q3 2010

There's a bit of confusion about when this update of last year's *Alien Breed: Evolution* will be released on PSN. All the same, it's a slice of classic top-down shooter action involving legions of marauding xenomorph-alikes and a fiendish level of difficulty. Two player co-op is sure to make the game a lot of fun.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

Crazy Taxi

Publisher: Sega **Developer:** Sega Studios Shanghai **ETA:** September

Crazy Taxi is part of the first wave of Dreamcast ports heading to PSN. It will be converted to widescreen and have a few graphical tweaks. Sadly, licensing constraints mean the game has lost the names of some fast food restaurants (not so bad) as well as the original's great music (very bad). Still, it's a classic, so there's always that.

Journey

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer:** thatgamecompany **ETA:** 2011

We're over the initial wow factor of *Journey* and are well into the 'we can't wait for it to come out' place. Jenova Chen, director of the game, talked of man's relationship with power and how we only hold a tenuous grasp on that we wield being his inspiration. It sounds pretty deep, but it should provide some interesting gaming.

Project Dust

Publisher: Ubisoft **Developer:** Ubisoft Montpellier **ETA:** 2011

Eric Chahi's involvement with *Project Dust* has us all excited. Chahi created the classic *Another World* and his team's new game looks to be something we haven't seen a lot of in recent years – a god game. Modifying the very world around you to save a race of people from annihilation sounds to us like a good way to spend an evening.

Rayman Origins

Publisher: Ubisoft **Developer:** Ubisoft Montpellier **ETA:** Late 2010

Another Ubisoft property, another legendary developer and another mention of a classic platforming title – this time it's the rebirth of Michel Ancel's *Rayman*, going back to the series' roots. We don't have many details on *Rayman Origins* as of yet other than he's teaming up for an adventure with his very own id.

Bionic Commando Rearmed 2

Publisher: Capcom **Developer:** Fatshark **ETA:** 2011

This sequel to 2008's PSN original has gamers up in arms, all because of the addition of a jump button. It sounds daft, but previous *BC* games (bar the full remake on PS3) haven't had one, so it's clear why people are moody. We've heard it doesn't have much of an impact, and if it's kept pretty much the same as before it'll be no bad thing.

Dead Nation

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer:** Housemarque **ETA:** Late 2010

Another day, another zombie outbreak destroying humanity as we know it and another one man trying to *survive*. *Dead Nation* may get our blood pumping about as fast as the undead it has so many of in the game, but the fact it's by Housemarque (*Super Stardust HD*) gives us hope for this top-down, twin-stick shooter.

The Fight

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer:** Sony Computer Entertainment **ETA:** October

Interesting titles don't seem to be the name of the game when it comes to Sony's Move lineup, and *The Fight* is no different. Controlling your brawler with Move, you can dodge, duck, dive and uppercut in a game that we're assured controls very accurately. It'll need more of a (right) hook to really draw more people in, though.

Sorcery

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer:** Sony Computer Entertainment **ETA:** TBC

With its Faerie Kingdom, goblins and magic wand we expected to turn this off pretty quick, but then we saw *Sorcery*, how well it works and the potential for looking like a prat as you act like a wizard. More than 12 upgradable spells, a mixture of puzzling and action and the ability to act out the drinking of a potion make this one we're curious about.

Ape Escape

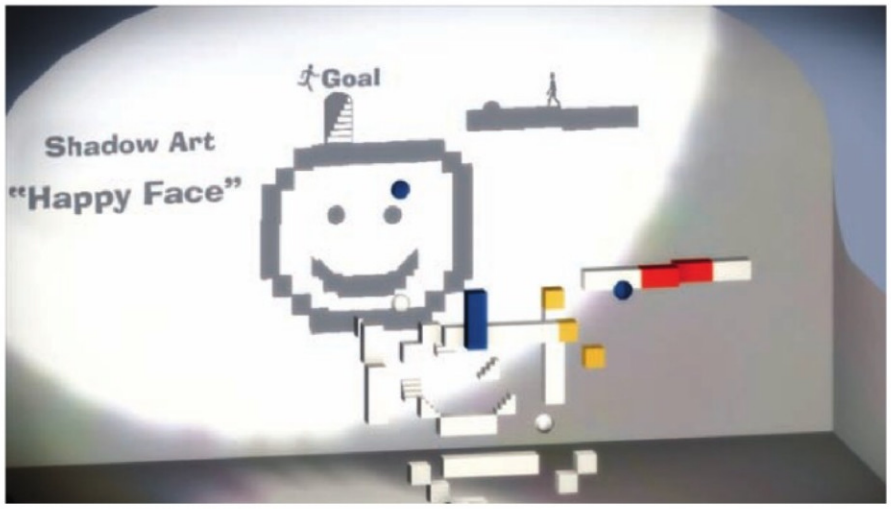
Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer:** Japan Studio **ETA:** TBC

How this crazy monkey catcher will work with Move is sure to be incredibly tiring at the very least, so it will be interesting to see whether Sony decides to opt for the 'DualShock approach' that the company used for the original *Ape Escape* – ie make Move mandatory.

De Blob 2: The Underground

Publisher: THQ **Developer:** Blue Tongue Entertainment **ETA:** 2011

We've not seen *De Blob 2* being controlled with Move, but it's safe to say it will support the control scheme – especially as the original was Wii-exclusive. As the titular blob, players make their way through a monochromatic 2D platformer and return colour to the world. With four-player co-op, *De Blob 2* is one to keep an eye on.



echochrome 2

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer:** Japan Studio **ETA:** September

While before *echochrome* was all about manipulating perspective to get your little man to the goal, this time it's about manipulating perspective *and* shadows. The Move controller acts as a flashlight, with shadows cast on the background formed from collections of shapes in the foreground.

Heroes On The Move

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer:** Nihilistic Software **ETA:** TBC 2010

Bringing together six characters from *Ratchet & Clank*, *Jak And Daxter* and *Sly Cooper*, *Heroes On The Move* is also home to a terrible pun. The game is a platformer and uses Move controls to carry out the various jump, throw and smashing actions. If that isn't enough to interest you, how about this: Nihilistic previously made *Conan* on PS3. Sold!

www.imagineshop.co.uk

R.U.S.E.

Publisher: Ubisoft **Developer:** Eugen Systems **ETA:** September

Briefly mentioned as supporting Move during E3, *R.U.S.E.* was not actually shown using the controller at the event. We will, however, have a hands-on with the game – using Sony's motion controls – come next issue. For now be sated by the knowledge this RTS has been getting decent write-ups from those involved in its PC beta.

The Shoot

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer:** Cohort Studios **ETA:** September

Channelling the classic on-rails arcade lightgun games, *The Shoot* offers players five B-movie environments to shoot their way through. A few special powers and two-player co-op may keep this one on the radars of some, but we're remaining cautious – we've seen far too many similar Wii games to get really excited straight away.

Sports Champions

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer:** Zindagi Games **ETA:** September

Sports Champions is a collection of six different events in one package: disc golf, gladiator duel, volleyball, archery, table tennis and bocce. Each game employs the controller in different ways – swinging, aiming and volleyballing – and it looks to be everything you would expect from something that looks like PS3's version of Wii Sports.

Time Crisis: Razing Storm

Publisher: Namco Bandai Games **Developer:** Nex Entertainment **ETA:** September

A new *Time Crisis* game used to be cause for major celebration – and we're hoping this Move version of last year's arcade game can reignite our passion for it. Especially as it includes *Time Crisis 4* and new property *DeadStorm Pirates*. However, the developer's previous works on PS3 are *Time Crisis 4* – poor – and *Bayonetta* – a poor conversion.

UFC Trainer

Publisher: THQ **Developer:** THQ **ETA:** 2011

This one is being marketed as *Wii Fit* with a more combative edge. It may be stereotypically boyish of us to say this, but that does actually grab our interest. Hopefully the training regimes in the game will be good enough to get us up to standard in case we ever go head-to-head with Brock Lesnar some time in the future.

Kung Fu Rider

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer:** Japan Studio **ETA:** TBC 2010

Choosing from one of two characters, players have to escape the yakuza in Tokyo. Oh, they're escaping on an office chair – we forgot to mention. Rolling through the streets, Move is used to juke the chair left and right, steer, dodge and attack. It's a wacky idea and delightfully light-hearted when put next to a lot of other Move efforts.

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PLAY Reviews 点検

Playing bad games so you don't have to

Including: Singularity *makes a bid for the Dark Horse 2010 award* /// Everybody's Tennis *is ace* /// Naughty Bear *goes psycho in the woods today*

94 Singularity

A dangerous experiment goes horribly right

"A totally worthwhile and recommendable first-person shooter"

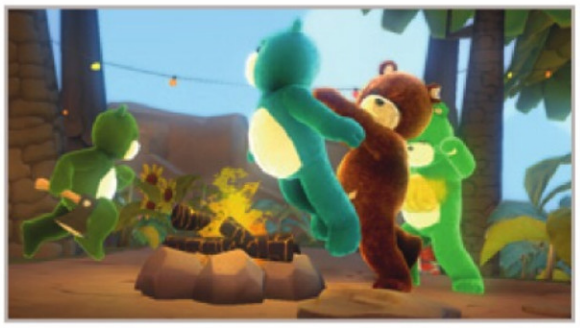
on review

96 Toy Story 3 PS3

We've got a Woody

97 Everybody's Tennis PSP

Everyone for tennis?



98 Naughty Bear PS3

Bear atrocities

review panel

Luke Albigés

Reviewed: *Singularity*

Luke's awesome band, MG & The Juggernaut – the one he's in with Simon Miller and Perry Wardell-Wicks from **Play**'s sister magazines **X360** and **360** respectively plus someone else who doesn't even work here – is all set to go on tour with a band who once supported Bon Jovi, which means they're essentially one career step away from supporting the mighty Bon Jovi themselves. When asked which Bon Jovi song he would most like to cover, Luke, without even a moment's hesitation, answered *Bad Medicine*.

currently playing:
Rock Band 2

Dan Howdle

Reviewed: *Toy Story 3*

Dan has been cultivating a most impressive set of mutton chops of late, and is starting to look a lot like a very distinguished Victorian gentleman out of a Charles Dickens novel. He is planning to accessorise his fancy new sideburns with a new gold pocket watch and a stick and hoop to replace his PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 and nuclear-powered gaming PC. He really shall look absolutely resplendent in the finest of fine finery as he strolls along the promenade at Boscombe, walking cane in hand. Jolly good.

currently playing:
Demon's Souls

Ben Biggs

Reviewed: *Naughty Bear*

This month Ben has been gambling, fighting and drinking. If only he had done some womanising he would have the full set of Real Man attributes. His gambling proved successful, resulting in winnings of £200 (don't gamble, though, kids, it's not big and it's not clever). The fighting was a success inasmuch as he feels he's now a better fighter having been well and truly beaten (don't fight, though, kids, it is big but not clever) and when he drank, he drank everything and became "quite silly" (just take our word for it and don't drink, kids).

currently playing:
Singularity

Ian Dransfield

Reviewed: *Everybody's Tennis*

Ian stayed at a farm in Norfolk for some reason recently and while there he met the greatest dog in the world. Dylan, a dog who Ian claims is even greater than Lassie, The Littlest Hobo, Benji and Fanny The Wonder Dog put together (quite a claim we're sure you'll agree), is a happy, friendly springer spaniel who loves nothing more than fetching sticks from the river on a hot, British summer's day. And Ian was only too pleased to throw those sticks, so throw them he did. All day long. Unfortunately their holiday romance couldn't last forever.

currently playing:
Transformers: War For Cybertron

The sniper rifle lets you briefly bring the action to a halt as you line up the perfect shot.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Singularity

2010's dark horse gallops onto the scene

DETAILS

Publisher Activision
Developer Raven
Price £39.99
Players 1 (2-12 online)
Genre FPS
Supports 1080i, 720p, PlayStation Network, Sixaxis, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating 18
Website www.singularity-game.com

PS3

Has Activision paved paradise and put up a parking lot? Probably not – the publishing superpower deals more in the videogame sector than in real estate – but in the case of *Singularity*, it's certainly fair to say that the US firm won't know what it's got 'til it's gone. For a publisher that specialises in high-end blockbuster FPS titles, we'd not think it unfair to expect Activision to see the potential in Raven's latest project but instead, the game sneaked its way onto shelves with no fanfare and no warning. And it's a real shame because with a little more of a push, a little more faith in a new IP that clearly doesn't have the benefit of brand recognition that Activision usually employs so well, *Singularity* could have been so much more than what it is destined to be – a sleeper hit for 2010 in the eyes of the few that actually play it.

Ghostly visions are no rare occurrence in *Singularity*.

In terms of setup, *Singularity* offers two contrasting styles that somehow resonate wonderfully with one another to create a unique and harmonious foundation. On the one hand, it offers the same kind of over-the-top silliness found in the marvellous *TimeSplitters* games, unashamed to introduce concepts or oh-so-convenient occurrences that might elsewhere be developed into more serious, believable themes. But then it manages to take these hammy and even stupid concepts and make them as affecting as anything else in the genre, dropping *BioShock*-esque creep-out moments and intense action set pieces that recall greats such as *Unreal Tournament* – admittedly it does so without such an evident air of ability as the big-name developers behind the big-name games we've mentioned so far, though Raven's handiwork here is often commendable all the same.

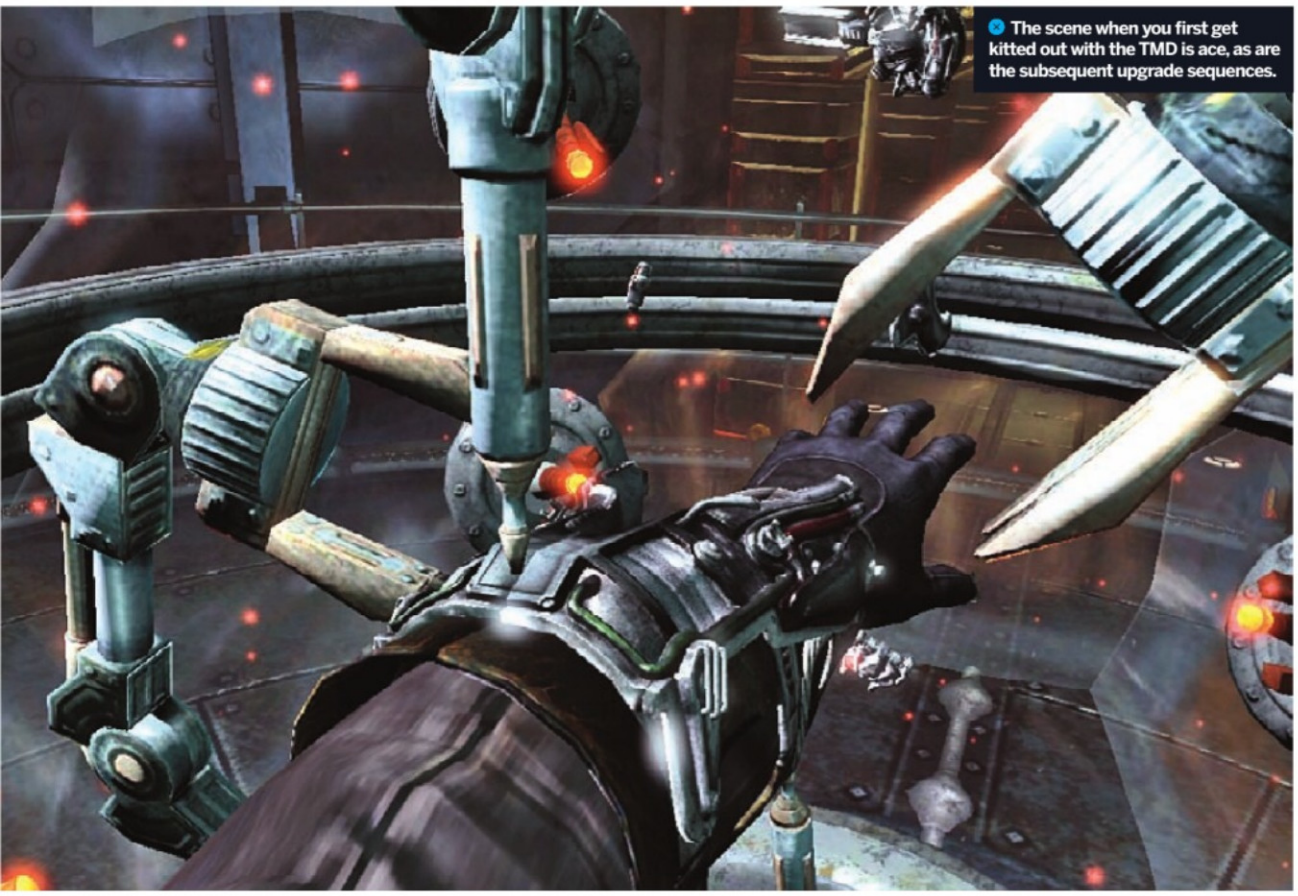
> All very familiar, but it certainly can't hurt Singularity's cause to have it mentioned in the same breath as so many of the genre's greats

If it seems like we're name-checking a lot of other games, we are. It's part of what makes *Singularity* what it is and like *Dead Space* before it, this is a title that offers little originality but still manages to entertain almost constantly with an explosive and entertaining covers set. From guns to settings, mechanics to incidental features, there's little here to point at and say 'Raven thought of that'. Time manipulation feels not unlike it did in the somewhat rubbish

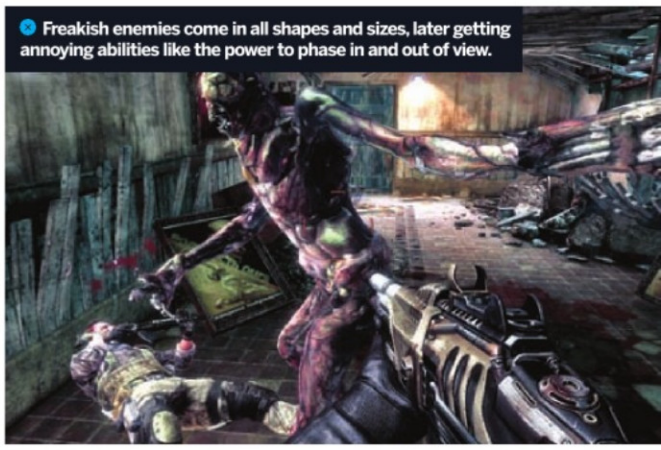
TMD: THINGAMAJIG OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Time waits for no man... except you

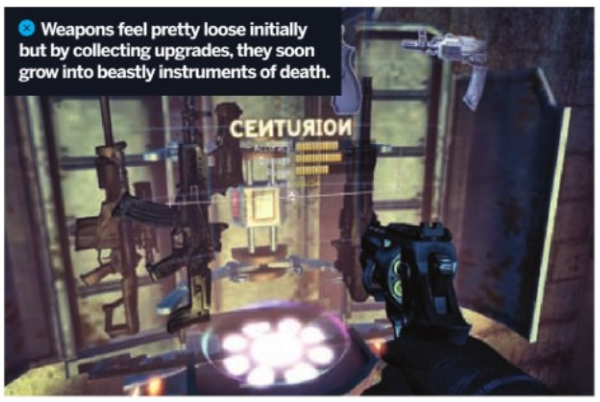
SINGULARITY STARTS IN a similar way to *BioShock*, a helicopter rather than a plane going down over a disused facility with your accidental hero here a soldier. And while the concept of time travel and control is toyed with early on, it's not until you strap on the TMD that things get interesting. Between pockets of frozen time, the ability to break or rebuild many objects through ageing and a gravity gun-style grab mechanic, there's plenty that can be done with this funky wrist attachment. And as Raven shows with its ingenious implementation of its myriad uses, the puzzle potential of such a weaponised time control device is every bit as useful as its combat ability.



The scene when you first get kitted out with the TMD is ace, as are the subsequent upgrade sequences.



Freakish enemies come in all shapes and sizes, later getting annoying abilities like the power to phase in and out of view.



Weapons feel pretty loose initially but by collecting upgrades, they soon grow into beastly instruments of death.

TimeShift, though its use here is far cleverer; weapons and enemies come in from all over the genre, from the high-impact shotgun that recalls the best genre equivalents as it shreds heads to the Seeker, a prototype mini rocket launcher with user-controlled projectiles that work like shrunken versions of *Unreal*'s Redeemer missiles; audio logs and information video reels scattered about the place give inquisitive, explorative types a little more back story on this messed-up alternative game world that tells of the dangers of experimenting with things we don't understand. All very familiar, but it certainly can't hurt *Singularity*'s cause to have it mentioned in the same breath as so many of the genre's greats from over the years.

And on the whole, Raven's greatest hits package of classic FPS elements is adeptly handled, too. There's the odd minor bug that hints at a game that has been forced out the door a little early, but it never really impacts on the overall experience – every niggle, such as losing your melee attack when you get your time powers, fades into insignificance as more and more heavy firepower falls into your lap as the impressive set pieces roll out one after another. Another healthy comparison would be to the mighty *Half-Life 2*, physics-based puzzles involving the regression and ageing of environmental objects slowly growing more ingenious as the story progresses and new powers are introduced.

It's no slouch visually either and from the haunting architecture of a bygone age to the towering statues of former leaders that have now fallen into disrepair (hello, *BioShock*), you're never left wanting for something pretty to look at. *Singularity* is also a game that wears its 18 certificate with pride, never afraid to show limbs ripped clean off by a well-placed sniper shot or worse, brutal and bloody body explosions when hapless enemies hit with the upgraded TMD melee blast.

As we've mentioned, it's not without its problems but then with the distinct lack of pre-release hype, we'd quite honestly expected *Singularity* to be an unmitigated disaster. Imagine our surprise, then, when Raven's latest actually turned out to be one of the most entertaining, varied and compelling shooters in some time. It's not going to lay claim to any of the genre leaders' crowns any time soon, don't get us wrong. But by imitating greatness and not worrying about being too silly with it, *Singularity* winds up a totally worthwhile and recommendable FPS. Who'd have thought it?

Luke Albiges

VERDICT

A pleasant surprise, *Singularity* came out of nowhere to impress us. Was it because we had such low expectations? Possibly. But however you look at it, Raven's most recent work is a competent and compelling shooter that's well worth playing.

80%

Or you could try

BioShock 2 Issue 189
Raven's latest has much in common with 2K's sequel. Who knew? **88%**

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Toy Story 3

You've got a friend in this

DETAILS

Publisher
Disney Interactive
Developer
Disney Interactive
Price
£49.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Platform
Supports
720p, Dolby Digital 5.1, Move controller (for DLC minigames only)
Website
http://disney.go.com/toystory

PS3

Film tie-ins are rubbish. Kids games are often worse. At least, that's the norm. The former are the hurried together leftover giblets of generic 'Cartoon Platformer X' circa 2002, the latter, on account of your average professional videogame reviewer burning more than five candles. A kids game that's also a film tie-in? In a world of adult-facing videogame critique, it's the perfect storm of justifiable prejudice.

Breaking down how these reviews usually go, they all seem to hone in on the same criticisms. A) The game was rushed out with little budget or thought. B) That gameplay is a largely foreign concept. C) That there's no invention. D) That the voice acting is terrible. E) That the graphics are horrible. F) That the game is plagued by unbearably repetitious tasks. G) That it's not as good as the movie.

But what happens when a game's developer/publisher decides that, rather than fall foul of these numerous basic trappings in the road to videogame obscurity, it will instead set out to make something respectable; something at which no one in their right mind could possibly sling any of the mud catalogued above. Something whose quality screams out at your every fleeting control input. Such is the lot for the almost-too-brilliant *Toy Story 3*.

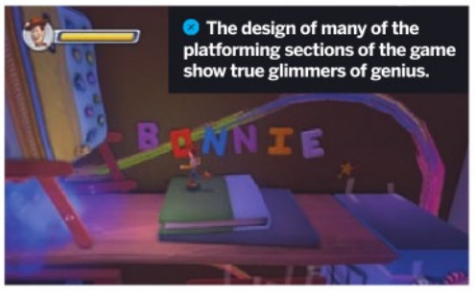
> There are shades of Super Mario Galaxy here, but Toy Story 3 has style and substance all of its own

See that? That's in-engine that is. Impressive... isn't it?

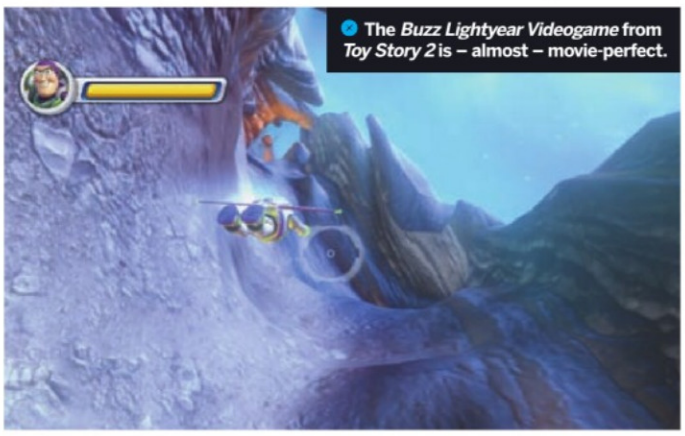
The game feature's two modes. The first is Toy Box, which is essentially a toy Wild West town. As Woody, it's your job to complete a myriad of missions in order to make cash. With the cash you earn you can buy new buildings and customise them, their occupants and the town's layout. We spent hours doing this and there's such a huge variety of tasks to complete, we almost forgot entirely about the game's story mode.

Which would be a shame, because the vast majority of it is nothing short of inspired. There are shades of *Super Mario Galaxy* here, but *Toy Story 3* has style and substance all of its own thanks to the strength of the franchise from which it springs. Compared to its peers, *Toy Story 3* is gameplay dynamite, with the visuals going way beyond the call of duty to present the player with a pretty close approximation of actual Pixar finesse. Highly recommended for the four to twelve year olds, and even to open-minded adults. Just be sure and keep it to yourselves.

Dan Howdle



The design of many of the platforming sections of the game show true glimmers of genius.


The *Buzz Lightyear Videogame* from *Toy Story 2* is – almost – movie-perfect.

VERDICT

Ultimately, asking yourself 'Is it possible to make a better *Toy Story* game aimed at kids?' gives you an idea of just how far ahead of the curve *Toy Story 3* truly is.

82%

Or you could try

Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs Issue 182
A wonderful example of what we usually expect from kiddy-flick tie-ins. Lame. **47%**

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RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Everybody's Tennis

DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer
Clap Hanz
Price
£19.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Sports
Supports
Ad-hoc Wi-Fi Multiplayer, Game Sharing, TV In/Out
Age Rating
3+
Website
http://bit.ly/9EP4Zz

Not just for the poshos at the lawn tennis club

PSP

Sitting perfectly alongside *Everybody's Golf*, this second tennis incarnation for Clap Hanz's series of wonderful sports games hits all the right notes once more, making for one of the best sports games available on PSP.

The actual tennis plays out as you would expect, but with influence taken from the golf stable of the *Everybody's* series of games. Rather than tapping a button that sets your player and the shot being carried out thereafter, *Everybody's Tennis* requires players use their timing and judgement to study when and where they should hit a ball. Hit it too early or too late and you won't have full control over your shot, meaning that it won't go exactly where you want it to. It takes a bit of adjustment if you're used to other tennis titles, but it's all the more rewarding and means games involve a genuine level of skill and concentration. The game does offer visual cues and there is the option to have helpers on screen at all times for those who are worried they aren't good enough, so it still caters for... well... everybody.

> It reminds us of Super Tennis, which is a very good thing

Everybody's Tennis can be played in standard form, taking on the computer or some mates (via LAN), but the standard single-player mode is an interesting one. In it, players are tasked with travelling the world to make people happy through tennis – this is all true – which sees them battling all manner of different people across the globe through the great leveller that is thwacking a ball over a net with a racquet. It's a bit mad, a bit funny and bizarrely captivating. Aside from some rather banal – though sometimes amusing – conversations and the feeling that the hubs you inhabit are a bit unnecessary, it's a fun little addition to the game and, at the very least, brings a bit of spark to what would otherwise be a simple menu screen.

As you play through the story mode, consistent use of the same character will reward you with loyalty (just as in *Everybody's Golf*). What this leads to is better shots and serves, greater effects from equipment and an all-round smug feeling that you really do love your tiny character. Upgrading and increasing the stats of your character also means that the initial roster isn't made obsolete as the game progresses, and that you will probably spend far more time than is healthy with the little blighters.

Oh, and the biggest compliment we can give it is that it reminds us of *Super Tennis*, which is a very good thing.

Ian Dransfield

The story takes in all kinds of loveable madness.

On-screen prompts let you know if you're too fast or slow.

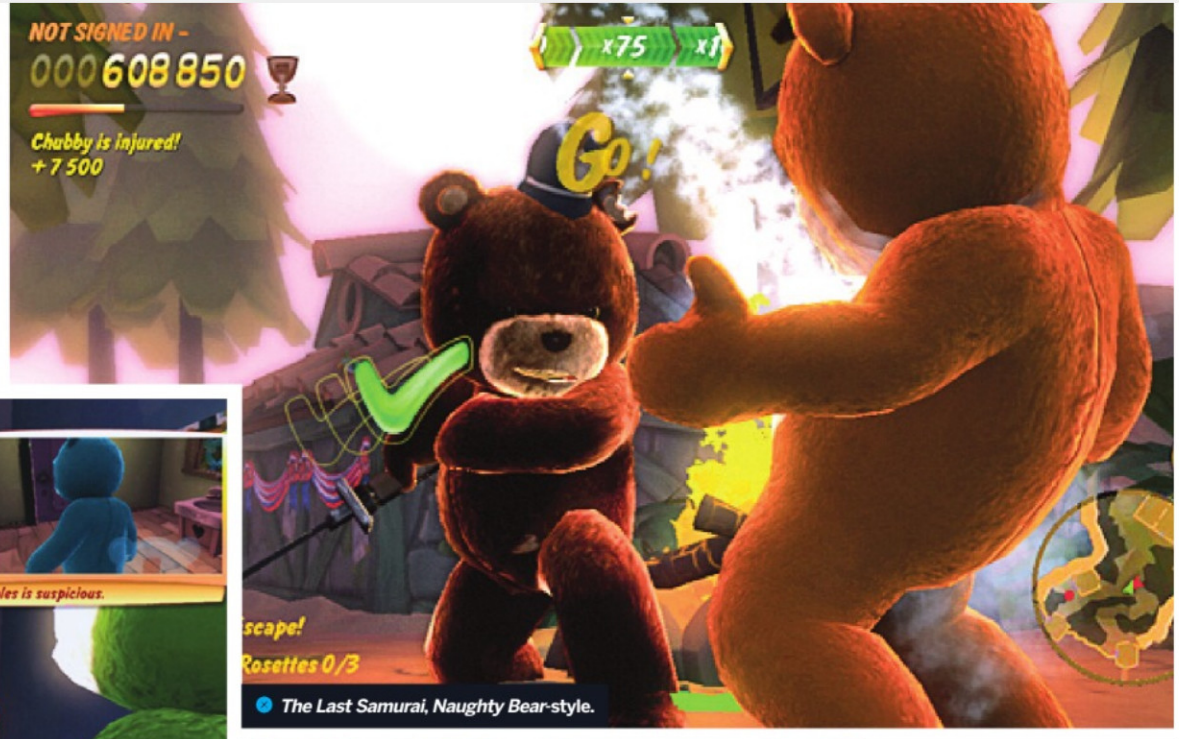
VERDICT

The emphasis on timing brings real skill to the game and it'll last you an age. Get beyond the presentation – as is key with all *Everybody's* titles – and you will be rewarded with a deep, strategic and challenging game of tennis.

88%

Or you could try

Everybody's Golf 2 Issue 167
Like tennis, only golf. The perfect sporting accompaniment. **86%**



The Last Samurai, Naughty Bear-style.

The teddies have a nervous disposition, so a surprise "boo!" works remarkably well.

Why did the Naughty Bear cross the road? To see his flat mates.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Naughty Bear

Don't go down to the woods today

DETAILS

Publisher 505 Games
Developer Artificial Mind and Movement
Price £39.99
Players 1-4
Genre Sandbox action
Supports 720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, DualShock 3
Age Rating 12
Website www.naughtybearthegame.com

PS3

"What's this?" a non-gamer colleague asks as the eponymous Naughty Bear squats behind a leafy shrub while Sunbeam and Cuddles exchange a phonetic teddy greeting as they pass on the path. One swift baseball bat murder later in which Naughty straddles his unfortunate victim and beats its head until it's disturbingly flat, and curiosity has transformed into a vague sense of horror. That's a typical reaction to *Naughty Bear*, the bitter and warped pariah in teddy land: snubbed by the other teddies, he snaps and goes on a homicidal rampage across the island. And as far as the plot goes, that's as sophisticated as it gets.

Your goal as a murderous misfit of a stuffed toy is to cause your fellow teddies as much misery as possible by knocking the stuffing out of them and smashing the island up. Machete-hack the other bears down, repeatedly axe them in the face, shoot them, beat them, burn them – there are dozens of potential weapons lying around, each of which offer a sadistic new way to maim and murder. Sabotage objects and attack teddies while they're fixing them, then chain your acts of violence to increase your multiplier for bigger Naughty Points, the currency of *Naughty Bear* that unlocks extra content. In an even darker twist, if you actively scare unwary teddies enough with the left trigger, you can turn them insane. And if you scare those traumatised bears again, they'll commit suicide... which raised an incredulous eyebrow or two, we can tell you.

None of this is gruesome, after all that's just stuffing pouring out of that crippled and dying bear's chest you're stabbing, but we still don't know how this was squeezed through PEGI's 12-rating. Perhaps the classification board was thrown by the banal narrator, who reports your every naughty combination and achievement in annoying, 'Geoffrey from *Rainbow*' overtones.

The extreme prejudice towards stuffed animals doesn't bother us (though we do wonder about the teddy-bear issues *Naughty Bear*'s creators have), as *Grand Theft Auto IV*, *Manhunt* and *Resident Evil* number among our repertoire of games that Fox News will likely blame for the Apocalypse when it arrives. But apart from a handful of multiplayer modes and challenges, there's little substance beyond the wholesale eradication of anything remotely sentient on teddy island. The novelty of a dark and twisted children's game very quickly wears off and after that, all you're left with is a rudimentary *Grand Theft Auto* in bear suits.

Ben Biggs

> It's just a rudimentary Grand Theft Auto in bear suits

This is the elusive Unibear: you'll get big points however you choose to kill him.

Don't let the bears escape – sabotage their only exit from the island.

VERDICT

Once the gimmick of a teddy gone bad wears off, moments of humour and sandbox creativity are few and far between swathes of brainless button bashing.

64%

Previously... in Play

PREVIEWED Issue 192
"*Naughty Bear* doesn't have gallons upon gallons of blood, but that's because teddies don't bleed."

www.imagineshop.co.uk

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

3D Collection

Or: WipEout HD, Pain, Super Stardust and MotorStorm: Pacific Rift in 3D

WipEout HD is the best this pack has to offer.

DETAILS

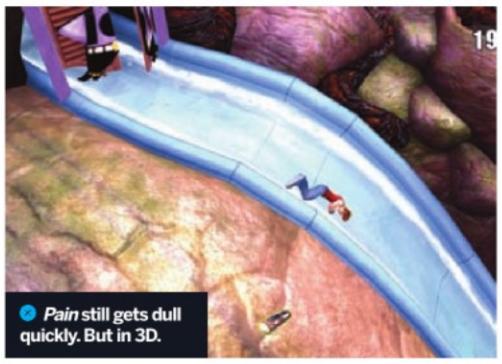
Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer Housemarque, Evolution Studios, Studio Liverpool, Idol Minds
Price £23.99
Players 1-4
Genre Various
Supports 1080p, 1080i, 720p, PSN, Downloadable content, Sixaxis, DualShock 3, 3D
Age Rating 16
Website www.uk.playstation.com

PS3

There is one massive prerequisite that you should all consider before forking out your hard-earned money on this pack and expecting your mind to be blown with a whole new dimension of gaming: a 3DTV. Without it, you cannot experience these revamped versions of previously released PlayStation Network games in the new, spangly three-dimensional way – though you can just play them as they were before instead.

WipEout HD is easily the best this pack has to offer, both as a game and as a demonstration of what 3D can do for games. While it doesn't change the manner in which you play the game, nor does it have any effect on the mechanics of the game, it does offer a tangible sense of depth to races. Corners can be judged that bit better and the distance between your craft and that of an opponent is easier to assess. You do have to constantly refocus your vision should you wish to check the HUD, however – an issue that can cost whole races.

Pacific Rift looks good in 3D but *Apocalypse* looks a lot better.


Pain still gets dull quickly. But in 3D.

Pain is a waste of time. There are only five modes available in 3D and none of them will keep your attention for more than half an hour, tops. Mime Toss/Alien Toss (they're interchangeable) is probably the way to go, but the 3D is underwhelming at best; downright poor at worst.

Super Stardust HD is a great game, and while the addition of 3D doesn't fundamentally change how you play, it does have a few neat visual tricks. Though that is the case, aside from when you die and you are showered with sparks coming towards you, there's little to lift this beyond a novelty addition.

> It's a nice little showcase of the future of 3D, but right now it's little more than a fairly clumsy demo

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift only offers a one-track demo and the 3D isn't as impressive as on the latest in the series, *Apocalypse*. It's still quite cool to see mud and debris flying out of the screen towards you, even if it is both short-lived and a bit basic.

If you don't own a 3DTV, though, it's probably not worth getting this pack, as £23.99 for two good games, a demo and a dodgy mini-game really isn't that cheap. Having said that, you can just buy the games individually and they will be patched up to stereoscopic 3D capability – the same goes for those of you who already own the games. It's a nice little showcase of the future of 3D, but right now it's little more than a fairly clumsy demo.

Ian Dransfield

You'll have to take our word for it, as we can't screengrab 3D.

Super Stardust is still painfully addictive. BUT IN 3D!

VERDICT

It's pretty difficult to rate this entirely on the fact these games have had 3D patched into them. That comes for free if you already own the game, and even without it a couple of them are great titles. It *is* 3D, though, clumsy as it seems.

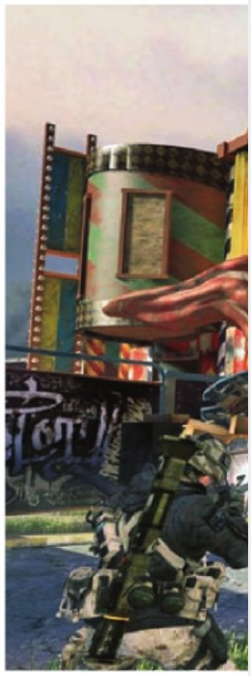
75%

Previously... in Play

REVIEWED Issue 183, 172, 155
Pain: **69%**, *WipEout HD*: **84%**, *Super Stardust HD*: **74%**, *MotorStorm: Pacific Rift*: **93%**

"The best multiplayer we've ever played" 94%

We're not overly keen to see Strike return, mostly due to how unfair certain areas of its wide-open spaces can be.



Modern Warfare 2: Resurgence Pack

Will this entice you back into Modern Warfare's addictive ways?

DETAILS

Publisher Activision
Developer Infinity Ward
Release Date Out Now
Price £10.99
Players 1-16
Genre FPS
Supports 1080p, Downloadable content, Sixaxis, Dolby Digital 5.1, DualShock 3

Although it should really come as no surprise, there is a slightly worrying trend where *Modern Warfare 2*'s DLC is concerned. Much like the fairly solid *Stimulus Pack* from a few months ago, the *Resurgence Pack*, its follow-up, comes with two very odd decisions. The first is Activision's insistence of offering two old maps within the group of five. No one could take anything away from *MW*'s excellence, but constantly dipping into an old game doesn't exactly make your new experience any better. Directly attached to this is point number two: the price. Again, it's an area that's been done to death but £10.99 for only a smidgen of pristine content instantly raises question marks about why we weren't given five extras to boost our *Modern Warfare 2* habit.

With all that said, however, it's only fair to review the pack on its own merits and, in spite of Infinity Ward's divide, what's here is of the highest order, the finest of which is Carnival. Set exactly where the name suggests, the run-down funfair is surprisingly big with an insanely tactical edge. For the sniper in you, the varying levels open up some excellent vantage points, whereas those who prefer a run-'n'-gun approach can use the debris to unleash their drop-and-pop style of play. Taking advantage of the many hiding places can change a game entirely.

Continuing this namesake trend is Trailer Park, clearly made to send your adrenaline through the roof. Very tight and constructed like a maze of small corridors, it implores that you keep moving and punishes you if you don't. It also means, like so many *COD* maps, the majority of shoot-outs will be won purely on luck. Before you know it, yet another enemy will be making themselves known to you down the barrel of your gun. Whoever shoots first usually wins...

Finishing off the new additions is Fuel, a massive environment that encourages so many different proficiencies it can often be a mystery as to what your best stance is. It's also the map which will be baffling the first few playthroughs until it all of a sudden makes tremendous sense. The sheer size of it means learning how to use the surroundings to your benefit is key, often veering from a long-ranged method to a more in-your-face attack.

> The three new maps prove there's plenty of talent left within Infinity Ward's walls

If you're inclined to get suckered in by *Modern Warfare 2*'s sublime skills, it could be Fuel that keeps you utterly compelled.

To finish off the DLC there's also veteran favourites Strike and Vacant. Strike can still be amazingly frustrating, relying far too much on its few choke points where soldiers will continually pile up until everyone is

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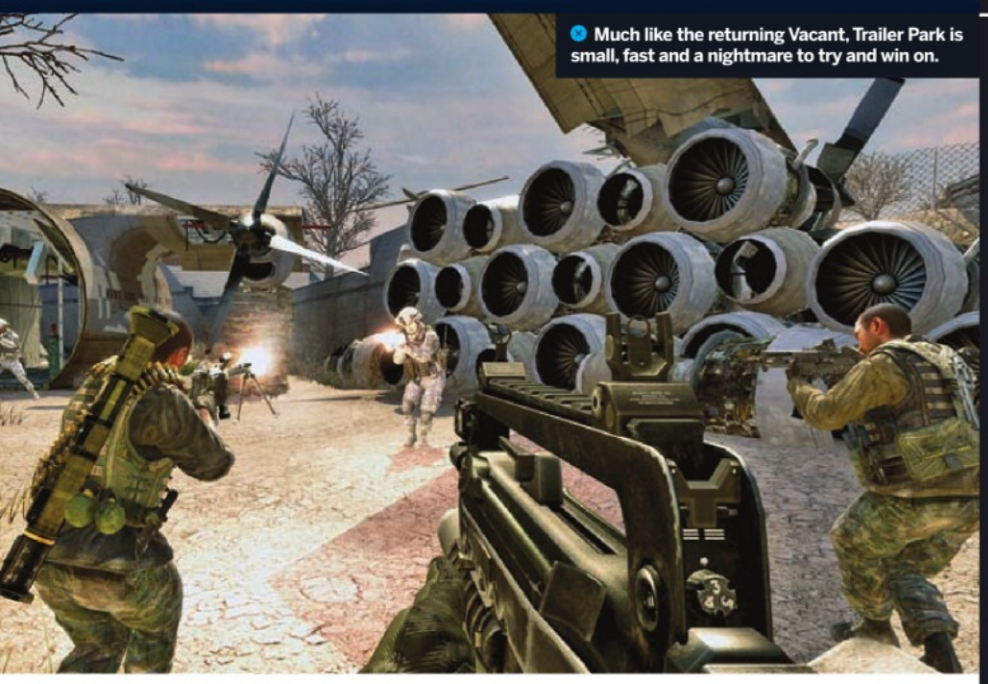

Much like the returning Vacant, Trailer Park is small, fast and a nightmare to try and win on.

Carnival is one of the best maps that you'll be treated to and, if nothing else, has a real distinct look and feel.

dead. Vacant remains, arguably, a touch of manic genius thanks to how packed in all its elements are. Despite our previous ramblings, it's rather nice having it back…

The *Resurgence Pack* is definitely the superior of the two current digital bundles and the three new maps prove there's plenty of talent left within Infinity Ward's walls. If we can lose this annoying custom of having to re-sample old jaunts, the next outing, if one comes to pass, could be absolute brilliance.
Simon Miller

VERDICT

The trio of new maps do a great job in adding some extra spice to the experience and even with two oldies, one of which doesn't really deserve the return, this is still *MW2*'s best piece of DLC yet and one that those still obsessed will lap up.
★★★★☆

LISTEN TO US

One step forward, two steps back

WE'RE FAIRLY SURE there's a group of *Modern Warfare 2* players that deliberately stick to a certain game type. Be it because they're not a big fan of the rest or just excel at a specific task, it's nice to be able to settle within such a mode and stay there as the hours pass you by. Although, once again, Infinity Ward has seen fit to open up a Resurgence option where you can play on just the new maps, it's still rather frustrating that the game modes are random. There's only so much of Headquarters you can take before Team Deathmatch becomes all you want to do. More often than not if you decide to make the change you'll have to sit through some of your old favourites till a new friend pops up. Certainly not atrocious, but more scope would be much appreciated for further content.

PSN Roundup

SINGULARITY

You've already played it

Publisher Activision Developer **Raven Software** **Price** £49.99 **Players** 1-16 **Genre** FPS

Raven Software could be the most 'solid' developer in the industry. Be it *Wolfenstein* or *Wolverine*, its games are never quite brilliant but never a complete abomination either. The same can also be said for *Singularity*, a very familiar if at times interesting shooter that never quite sets itself apart, be that offline or on. Feeling and playing very much like its elder World War II brother, players can compete in two modes, one of which is essentially deathmatch, the other focusing more on objectives. There's simply not enough originality here and both offerings become very repetitive far too quickly. In fact, it's incredibly unlikely

that you'll actually see any shooting such is the emphasis many players put on the magic they have at their disposal. Fun for all of a few games and then, more or less, irrelevant. **SM** ★★☆☆☆

TRANSFORMERS: WAR FOR CYBERTRON

Robots Of Duty…

Publisher Activision **Developer** High Moon **Price** £49.99 **Players** 1-16 **Genre** Third-person shooter

If you'd rather we sum up *Transformers: War For Cybertron*'s PSN offering in a few words, this is for you: it's a bit like *Modern Warfare*. Take the camera, move it into a third-person perspective, throw some iconic Eighties characters into the mix, make the gameplay slightly less slick and a little more clunky and your online experience begins to take shape. That's not to say it's bad, though – far from it. Creating your own robot before levelling it up as you plough hours of time into *War For Cybertron* is rather compelling. If you really lose yourself in it, the absolute beast you can create is rather special. With a

host of modes that simply represent all those we've come to expect from this genre of game, and a co-op jaunt to skip through with two friends, this is a very welcome surprise. **SM** ★★★☆☆

LEGO HARRY POTTER: YEARS 1-4

It could've easily been the best of the bunch

Publisher Warner Bros. **Developer** Traveller's Tales **Price** £49.99 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Platformer

For all the praise that many of the Lego titles receive, it's bizarre how inconsistent they can be. Despite adding online co-op in some of its games, Traveller's Tales has decided that when it comes to *Harry Potter* it's not needed. In a small sense, the developer is right. The reusing of its split-screen mechanic is very clever with the display separating the further the two characters get from one another. Considering a number of people who buy into the Lego franchise are families and that the games encourage same-console play, it's a sensible addition. The decision to ignore the PSN altogether, though, isn't. It just makes

Lego Harry Potter feel like a step back for the franchise. With the technology already implemented in other games, we expect TT to roll it out over all its projects, not just ignore it. **SM** ★★☆☆☆

DETAILS
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Hothead Games
Release Date Out Now
Price £9.99
Players 1-2
Genre RPG

DeathSpank GAME

A Diablo clone with dry humour and big weapons

WHEN THE CO-CREATOR of *The Secret Of Monkey Island* makes a brand-new videogame it's always best to take notice of it.

DeathSpank shares plenty of similarities with Tim Schafer's *Brütal Legend*. They both feature genuinely engaging protagonists, they're both set in strange fantasy worlds and both are a world away from the adventures that took place in *Monkey Island*.

At its simplest *DeathSpank* is what would happen if you stuck the leads of *Monkey Island* in *Diablo*. The titular DeathSpank is a wise-cracking hero who, while searching for a sacred item called 'The Artifact', inadvertently unleashes hell when he allows it to fall into the wrong hands.

Funny and irrelevant, *DeathSpank* feels nice and refreshing on PSN.

So off he goes, meeting a selection of motley characters, righting wrongs and killing chickens.

Fans of dungeon crawlers will adore *DeathSpank*. It has a huge amount of quests to complete, plenty of vicious monsters to defeat and an absolute wealth of weapons and items to discover. DeathSpank himself is something of a walking army, being able to switch between his trusty sword, an axe, a crossbow for ranged attacks and a hammer at will (all are assigned to the face buttons). Potions and food can be assigned to the D-pad, with different delicacies restoring DeathSpank's health over a certain amount of time.

Levelling up allows DeathSpank to choose from one of three cards (there are six in total) that boost everything from weapon damage to speed, while there are plenty of merchants spread out around the huge world map to buy new items from.

The humour won't sit with everyone and the nature of the genre means it features high difficulty spikes and monotonous grinding, but if you're looking for something a little different you could do a lot worse.

VERDICT

It's not for everyone, but the polished gameplay and sheer scale make *DeathSpank* well worth a download. **83%**

Red Dead Redemption: Outlaws To The End Co-Op Pack DLC

Free is the magic number

IF OUTLAWS TO *The End* is any indication of what Rockstar has in store for *Red Dead*'s online future, we're all in very safe hands.

No doubt realising that it's the ability to team up with a bunch of friends when playing online that really makes for the best experiences, Rockstar's first piece of DLC is a co-operative slice of heaven that, while short on variety, keeps you entertained with plenty to do. It introduces six new missions

DETAILS
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer BioWare
Release Date Out Now
Price £5.49
Players 1
Genre RPG

Dragon Age: Origins: Leliana's Song DLC

More DLC to make a song and dance about

AS WE GEAR up for a new *Dragon Age* game, it's good to know that BioWare is keeping the DLC flowing. It's latest episode, like *Darkspawn Chronicles* before it is a standalone adventure that doesn't directly follow on from *Origins* or *Awakening*.

This means that annoyingly, you won't be able to level up or import your existing adventurer from either game. It does, however, give you insight into Leliana, the Orlesian Bard from the original game. This well-paced flashback introduces the popular character and explains how she was tricked and betrayed by her mentor – although so obvious are the clues, we're surprised Leliana never saw it coming in the first place.

A pleasent diversion until the proper sequel turns up.

Teaming up with her friends, the stage is set for an entertaining quest that, while not introducing anything new to the series, nevertheless managed to keep us happy for its relatively short

playing time. Your characters start off at Level 10, upgrades are plentiful and there are a variety of shops to buy from, new characters to meet and plenty of enemies to fight. The story may initially appear to be a simple one that deals with betrayal, but as always, clever plot twists and some rather excellent voice acting keep the momentum going until the final conclusion.

It's tough at times and nowhere near as epic in scale as *Awakening*, but it's difficult to argue with the relatively cheap asking price.

VERDICT

This won't win any new converts to the *Dragon Age* cause, but fans of the series will be more than happy with this latest DLC.
★★★☆☆

Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge Special Edition GAME

Yo ho ho and plenty of fun

ALWAYS UNAFRAID TO court controversy we're going to openly state that *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* is a far better game than the excellent original, *The Secret Of Monkey Island*. Funnier jokes, smarter puzzles and more fleshed-out characters meant that we regularly returned to LucasArts' hilarious sequel, despite the fact that it's now 19 years old.

The time has come to put our floppy disks away for good, however, for LucasArts has given its wonderful sequel a high-definition makeover that makes this new PSN outing the definitive version of this true classic.

We won't tell you much about the main plot as we don't want to spoil it for those who haven't played it before, but suffice to say that Guybrush Threepwood is now a mighty pirate but still in a whole heap of trouble as he tries to thwart his ghostly nemesis, the dreaded pirate LeChuck.

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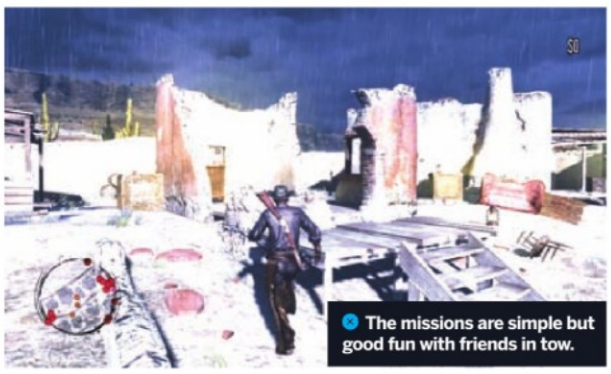
DETAILS

Publisher Rockstar Games **Developer** Rockstar San Diego **Release Date** Out Now **Price** Free **Players** 1-16 **Genre** Sandbox


The missions are simple but good fun with friends in tow.

that are available for up to four players. While the new content is little more than jazzed-up versions of scenarios from the single-player game, what's on offer is still pretty good fun, even if they are lacking in sophistication.

One mission requires you to rescue a damsel in distress, while another sees you floating down river and holding off attacking banditos, there's even the option to round up cattle. It's all pretty simplistic stuff, but there's something really exciting about teaming up with a group of friends – or strangers if that floats your boat – and seeing each mission out like brothers in arms.

Realising that variety always ensures continual play, Rockstar has packed this first piece of DLC with plenty of excellent bonuses. There are four distinct classes to choose from – soldier, gunslinger, miner and marksman – which ensures that different playing styles are catered for, the ability to unlock challenges, and best of all, a selection of new Trophies, which is bound to please all the Trophy hunters out there. We did notice the odd crash – although nowhere near as bad as before – and the cattle drive mission is downright terrible, but it's a very small price to pay considering you're getting all this for gratis.

VERDICT

Now excuse us, we're off to hunt down some more desperados.
★★★★☆

DETAILS

Publisher LucasArts **Developer** In-House **Release Date** Out Now **Price** £7.99 **Players** 1 **Genre** Adventure

Call us old-fashioned but we prefer the original graphics.

What we will tell you, though, is that by listening to feedback for *The Secret Of Monkey Island*, LucasArts has made many improvements to its latest special edition. The biggest difference and one we still can't decide upon is that it's now possible to simply move Guybrush around manually. You can still use the traditional point-and-click method, but this new method should certainly please console gamers who never experienced the original adventure. Another nice touch is that switching to the original pixelated mode still allows you to hear the greatly improved music and new voice acting, something that wasn't present in *The Secret Of Monkey Island*.

VERDICT

We're still unsure about the new high-definition visuals, but there's no denying that LucasArts is treating its revered series with the respect it deserves. Now bring back *Sam & Max Hit The Road*. **94%**

Store Roundup

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND SPECIAL EDITION GAME

Guybrush gets an HD makeover

Publisher LucasArts **Developer** In-House **Price** £7.99 **Players** 1 **Genre** Adventure

THE FIRST MONKEY *Island* game to get an HD makeover remains as fresh and funny as the day it was conceived. The adventures of Guybrush Threepwood hold up incredibly well and it remains one of the funniest games around. It's taken its time to get to PSN (the Live Arcade version arrived over a year ago) and it's overshadowed a bit by its sequel, but if you're looking for a classic point-and-click adventure this won't disappoint. **92%**

FINAL FANTASY IX GAME

You'll be on cloud nine with this one

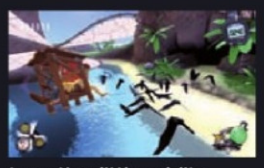
Publisher Square Enix **Developer** Squaresoft **Price** £7.99 **Players** 1 **Genre** RPG

SQUARE ENIX'S NINTH *Final Fantasy* game never appears to get the love it deserves. Maybe it's the oh-so-cute character design, or the way that the combat mechanics and gameplay are far more reminiscent of the earlier 16-bit adventures, but it always falls behind *Final Fantasy VII* and *VIII*. This is an error, for *Final Fantasy IX* is far more refreshing, because it scales things back and feels so traditional. Boasting a great story, charming characters and beautiful graphics, this is one RPG everyone should own. **90%**

LANDIT BANDIT GAME

Crazy Taxi goes back to the Stone Age

Publisher Ayware AB **Developer** The Bearded Ladies **Price** £9.99 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Action



TAKE CRAZY TAXI and cross it with the Stone Age and you have some idea about this interesting little oddity from Swedish developer The Bearded Ladies. Your job in *Landit Bandit* is to take control of a bizarre flying contraption, which you must guide around a group of islands while picking up and dropping off customers and also avoiding a whole host of nutty hazards, such as flying sharks. It certainly looks a little bit rough around the edges, but there's still something quite charming about this crazy little game. **66%**

ALIEN VS PREDATOR BUG HUNT MAP PACK DLC

They're coming outta the goddamn PS3

Publisher Sega **Developer** Rebellion **Release** **Price** £4.79 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Action

FANS OF REBELLION'S xenomorph blaster will be right at home with this new piece of DLC. For under a fiver you get four new maps – two for Survival mode, two for everything else – cool new weather conditions that really add to the game's atmosphere and... well, that's it. Worry not, though, because the four new stages are extremely well designed, with the two new survival mode maps being particularly good fun to fight on. So get downloading and bag yourself some nasty bugs. ★★★★★

SOLDNER-X 2: FINAL PROTOTYPE GAME

Give your trigger finger a workout

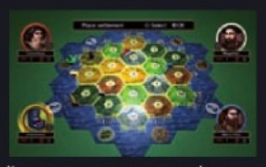
Publisher EastAsiaSoft **Developer** SideQuest Studios **Price** £9.99 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Shoot-'em-up

THE ORIGINAL SOLDNER-X was a crusty old shoot-'em-up that did the genre no service, so it's pleasing to see the sequel get so much right. For starters it sounds amazing with a brilliant soundtrack that perfectly matches the on-screen pyrotechnics. It's also got a fairer difficulty level, better level design and some superb-looking bosses to fight. The weapon system remains uninspired and it gets boring a little too quickly, but it's certainly good fun while it lasts. **70%**

CATAN GAME

You won't get 'board' of this

Publisher Game Republic **Developer** In-House **Price** £3.99 **Players** 1-4 **Genre** Board



BOARD GAMES ARE a real rarity on PlayStation Network, so it's satisfying to discover one as good as *Catan*. A simple resource-management game for four players, *Catan* requires you to build roads and settlements and outscore your opponents. As with many board games it really comes alive with additional players, but the computer AI puts up a relatively stiff fight and rarely cheats you. Visually it's all rather simplistic and the audio can grate at times, but as far as gameplay is concerned *Catan* is king. **85%**

Who needs wings and a giant sword when you have access to a gun?

Legion

Angels, machine guns and a mission from god

DETAILS

Price
£24.99
Sound
DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1
Director
Scott Charles Stewart
Starring
Paul Bettany, Lucas Black, Dennis Quaid

We're sure that when Scott Charles Stewart saw the script for *Legion* he had plenty of great ideas. After all, there's an apocalypse, angels, demons and guns. What could go wrong? Well as it stands, a lot.

From its nonsensical plot to its laughable dialogue and poorly cast actors, *Legion* is the sort of film Roger Corman would make if he was allowed anywhere near a decent-sized budget. The concept in its own way is sort of sound – an angel, Michael (Bettany), cuts off his wings, grabs some machine guns and shacks up in an out of the way diner with a bunch of stereotypes in order to save the unborn child of a heavily pregnant waitress for reasons that aren't entirely clear.

The idea that angels are actually bad – or at least misguided because they unquestionably follow someone who wants humanity wiped out – is an interesting touch, but any point it wants to try to make is lost in a sea of tired dialogue and overused clichés. As a result *Legion* is nothing more than an excuse for its director to wheel out as many gory deaths as possible and in doing so he actually makes *Legion* rather enjoyable, albeit for all the wrong reasons.

There's something rather tickling about seeing a sweet old lady munch into a maggot-ridden steak and then chomp into someone's neck before getting three slugs in the back. Even children aren't safe, with one scene involving a cute mop-topped child, a large butcher knife and two shot-off thumbs. It's all pulled off with a relish we've not seen since the immensely enjoyable *Drag Me To Hell* and it's made even funnier by the fact that so many of the actors are playing it dead straight while Bettany, chomping through lines like a man possessed, is clearly in on the joke.

The end result is that, despite the silliness that's taking place in front of your eyes, you're stuck watching if only so you can see which annoying stereotype will get picked off next. *Legion* is also helped by the fact that it's a pretty solid Blu-ray, particularly in the audio department. Crank up the sound and you'll be treated to some fantastic effects as the clever sound design makes full use of your speakers to create plenty of 'jump out of your seat' moments. Picture quality is also exceptional with plenty of detail in even the darkest scenes. Add in a solid range of extras including a fascinating Picture-in-Picture feature that has Stewart comparing his movie to classic comics and films and the end result is the perfect rental, but not really something you'd admit to actually keeping in your collection.

Darran Jones

We preferred the angels in *Dogma* if we're being completely honest.

VERDICT

Legion is incredibly silly and yet we still found it strangely mesmerising. It's nonsense, but nonsense of the highest order and certainly worth a quick rent if nothing else.

RATING: ★★★★★

Deep Blue Sea

PRICE: £17.99
SOUND: Dolby TrueHD 5.1
DIRECTOR: Renny Harlin
STARRING: Thomas Jane, Samuel L Jackson

IT MAY BE over a decade old now, but there's still something thoroughly entertaining about Renny Harlin's tale of clever killer sharks on the loose. With the YouTube generation now obsessed with the likes of *Mega Shark Vs Giant Octopus* it's rather entertaining to watch a monster movie that features genuinely decent effects and passable acting. Dumb, but still great fun. **DJ**
RATING: ★★★★★

The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo

PRICE: £24.99
SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1
DIRECTOR: Niels Arden Oplev
STARRING: Michael Nygvist, Noomi Rapace, Lena Endre

IT MAY FEATURE English subtitles, but Oplev's assured adaptation of Stieg Larsson's massively successful novel is still an essential watch. Brilliantly acted and faithfully following the source, *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* is fantastic. This is the sort of gritty thriller that Hollywood used to turn out in the Seventies. High praise indeed. **DJ**
RATING: ★★★★★

Solomon Kane

PRICE: £24.99
SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1
DIRECTOR: Michael J Bassett
STARRING: James Purefoy, John Comer, Jason Flemyng

SOLOMON KANE IS a surprisingly good yarn that proves that sometimes you really do need to answer violence with violence. After giving up his bloodthirsty ways, Kana soon has to return to them in order to rescue a kidnapped girl. While this sword and sorcery flick is small of budget, it's a far more satisfying and bloodthirsty romp than *Clash Of The Titans*. Highly recommended. **DJ**
RATING: ★★★★★

Psycho

PRICE: £19.99
SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1
DIRECTOR: Alfred Hitchcock
STARRING: Anthony Perkins, Janet Leigh

PSYCHO IS ONE of cinema's most revered horror films and this new Blu-ray doesn't disappoint. Newly restored and boasting a brand-new remixed score (the original mono offering is also included) this is the definitive version of Hitchcock's seminal masterpiece. Add in an astonishing array of extras and this is one movie that every Blu-ray owner needs in their collection. **DJ**
RATING: ★★★★★

Austin Powers

PRICE: £15.99
SOUND: Dolby TrueHD 5.1
DIRECTORS: Jay Roach
STARRING: Mike Myers, Elizabeth Hurley

THE DEBUT OF Britain's grooviest spy finally hits Blu-ray and it remains an achingly funny film, particularly in light of the dreary third movie. Hurley is as wooden as ever, but Myers' creations of Powers and Dr Evil remain always watchable thanks to clever observations and amazingly funny set pieces. The transfer itself is rather weak but the Blu-ray is packed with excellent extras. **DJ**
RATING: ★★★★★

The Machinist

PRICE: £24.99
SOUND: Dolby TrueHD 5.1
DIRECTOR: Brad Anderson
STARRING: Christian Bale, Jennifer Jason Leigh

THIS IMPRESSIVE-LOOKING Blu-ray allows you to see just how far Bale was prepared to go in order to portray the insomnia-stricken Trevor Reznik. Sharing similarities with *Momento*, *The Machinist* is a cleverly crafted thriller that sees Bale on the trail of an elusive killer who may be the cause of his affliction. A cracking film that's enhanced by a solid Blu-ray presentation. **DJ**
RATING: ★★★★★

HD Reviews

TVs and media systems that'll make your home entertainment come to life

Panasonic DMR-BS750EBK

PRICE: £345.99

ALTHOUGH THIS BLU-RAY player may initially seem quite pricey you're actually getting a lot of bang for your buck. In addition to a stunning picture, you've also got the ability to record onto Blu-rays or the HDD. It's also compatible with Viera Cast, allowing you to upload videos to the likes of YouTube. An expensive, but rather nifty Blu-ray recorder. ★★★★★

Samsung BD-C6900

PRICE: £261

WITH 3D SET to be all the rage in the not too distant future – if Sony has anything to do with it – it may be worth investing in a standalone player that can handle new three-dimensional movies. This offering from Samsung is perfect, giving an extremely solid performance at a relatively low price. Add in 7.1 surround sound and this is a great entry-level player. ★★★★★

Sony BDPS370

PRICE: £99.99

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for a secondary Blu-ray player for the lounge or bedroom then allow us to recommend this Sony model. While it's rather cheap and cheerful and lacking in features, it still manages to offer a very decent picture and solid DVD upscaling. It's not compatible with 3D movies but that could well change with a future firmware update. ★★★★★

Competition

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WIN! Divine Disc

An HDTV and a copy of Legion on Blu-ray up for grabs!

WHEN GOD DECIDES it's time for the human race to go the way of the dinosaurs you know things are bad, but when all hope lies in the belly of a wayward diner waitress it gets even worse. Paul Bettany plays the Archangel Michael who falls to Earth and chooses to defy God and protect the human race from an army led by God's right-hand man, Gabriel. The last stand takes place in a desolate diner where there's plenty of gunfire, explosions and un-angelic behaviour – all good stuff to give your HD setup a workout.

If, however, your entertainment system needs updating then why not enter our competition for an HDTV and a copy of *Legion* on Blu-ray. To be in with a chance of winning, all you have to do is answer this question:

What other religion-themed movie has Paul Bettany starred in?

a) The Da Vinci Code
b) The Passion Of The Christ
c) The Life Of Brian

Legion is out on Blu-ray and DVD on the 09 August, courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.

Terms And Conditions
To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line 'Legion competition' plus your name and address. The closing date for entries is 2 September. Please be aware that answers must be submitted to the above email address only, and any left through the comments section of our website will be automatically disqualified.

This competition is open to residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Imagine Publishing has the right to substitute the prize for a similar item of equal or higher value. Employees of Imagine Publishing (including freelancers), their relatives, or any agents are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash. Full terms and conditions are available upon request.

From time to time, Imagine Publishing or its agents may send you related material or special offers. If you do not want to receive this, please state it clearly on your competition entry.

PlayList

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

J'ACCUSE!

TimeSplitters

PS2 • Eidos • 2000 • Play 70 • 90%

IT MAY SEEM a little unfair to rag on a game released at the same time as a console – let's call it a 'launch' game – especially one received so well by most of the gaming press, but I'm going to do this to *TimeSplitters*. It was the only game I got with my launch-day PlayStation 2, along with a multitap and a few extra pads, and being from some people involved with the classic Nintendo 64 version of *GoldenEye* I was looking forward to it.

But my expectations were too high. It just didn't live up to the quality of *GoldenEye*, nor was it a patch on *Perfect Dark*. The main storyline felt disjointed and hasty, like a poor side attraction to the main course of multiplayer. Now, I've already admitted I bought the game with multiplayer in mind, so this can't have been much of a surprise – all the same, though, I didn't want to feel so short-changed from the first game I got for my brand-new console and, rather than loving it like I should, I ended up resenting it for not offering the addictive and full single-player experience I could get on other consoles.

Multiplayer was better – it felt fuller, like I was getting some value for money. But that didn't last, as the game succumbed to launch-game syndrome and revealed itself to be shallow and boring, devoid of anything to really keep you coming back for more beyond the initial honeymoon period. Beyond the novelty of interesting (note: not 'good') graphics and it all being on a shiny new DVD-playing console, *TimeSplitters* didn't curry favour in the Fins household for very long at all. We went back to *GoldenEye*, to be honest.

By Radial End Fins

PS3 LISTING

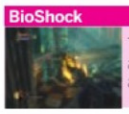
game	issue	score
3D Dot Game Heroes	**192**	**87%**
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	**177**	**61%**
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Alpha Protocol	**193**	**83%**
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	**173**	**70%**
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	**153**	**67%**
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	**188**	**65%**
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	**161**	**58%**
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Backbreaker	**193**	**70%**
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	**183**	**85%**
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	**168**	**78%**
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	**190**	**93%**

Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.

Bayonetta*	**187**	**93%**

The most over-the-top, inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years.

Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	**161**	**61%**
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	**172**	**93%**



This FPS-adventure hybrid has been admirably translated to the PS3. The most atmospheric game of our time.

BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	**163**	**43%**
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	**190**	**85%**
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Blitz: The League II	**172**	**67%**
Blur	193	86%
Borderlands	**185**	**80%**
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	**185**	**79%**
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	**168**	**82%**
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	**151**	**77%**
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	**160**	**88%**
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	**178**	**87%**
Civilization Revolution	**168**	**90%**

The popular PC series makes its way to the PS3, so you can while away your hours playing this instead of doing important things.

Clash Of The Titans	**193**	**65%**
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	**158**	**91%**

Quite simply the second-best rally game on the PS3. Still, if simulation is what you're after then go for this over *Sega Rally*.

Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	**178**	**65%**
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	**165**	**78%**
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Cross Edge	**182**	**59%**
Damnation	181	38%
Dante's Inferno	**189**	**80%**
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Void	**188**	**81%**
Darksiders	188	83%
Dead Space	**172**	**87%**
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Demon's Souls	**193**	**92%**

As good as it was when we reviewed it on import, but with a better translation and it's also available here. One of PS3's best games.

Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	**178**	**29%**
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	**175**	**81%**
DJ Hero	**186**	**91%**

It's just like playing *Guitar Hero* for the first time all over again, although *DJ Hero* is slightly more expensive.

Dragon Age: Origins	**186**	**82%**
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	**168**	**61%**
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2	**176**	**43%**
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	**164**	**30%**
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Eat Lead	**178**	**38%**
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	**168**	**60%**
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	**158**	**88%**
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	**165**	**91%**

The most recent *Tiger Woods* game may have been rubbish, but don't worry because *Everybody's Golf* is bloody brilliant.

Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	**185**	**83%**
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	**186**	**51%**
Fallout 3	**173**	**97%**

Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.

Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	**172**	**74%**
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	**176**	**87%**
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	**171**	**87%**
FIFA 10	**184**	**90%**

The best football game made marginally better. The crown held by *PES* seems like so long ago now.

FIFA Street 3	**163**	**66%**
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
Fight Night Round 3	**151**	**87%**
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	**190**	**85%**
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	**151**	**72%**
Fracture	171	72%
Fuel	**180**	**49%**
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
G-Force	**183**	**59%**
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	**157**	**83%**
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	**183**	**22%**
God Of War Collection*	**188**	**93%**

Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.

God Of War III	**190**	**88%**
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	**166**	**98%**

If you haven't already bought it, then stop reading this box, put your shoes on and go out and get it! The best game ever? Probably.

Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	**191**	**94%**

Two fine expansions bundled together and without the need for *GTA IV* to play them. What more could you want.

Guitar Hero III	**160**	**90%**

Guitar Hero III is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!

Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	**168**	**63%**
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	**179**	**88%**
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero World Tour	**173**	**95%**

World Tour just about manages to trump rival *Rock Band* with its entertaining music-creation tools, and quality peripherals.

Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	**155**	**32%**
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	**157**	**71%**
Heavy Rain	**189**	**94%**

It will certainly split opinion, but we absolutely love it. A valuable addition to the wonderful world of gaming.

Heroes Over Europe	**184**	**48%**
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	**183**	**72%**
inFamous	180	81%
International Cricket 2010	**194**	**61%**
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	**193**	**50%**
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	**187**	**64%**
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	**190**	**87%**
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Katamari Forever	**184**	**88%**
Killzone 2	**176**	**93%**

Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever.

Lair	158	52%
Last Rebellion	**191**	**42%**

www.imagineshop.co.uk

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Transformers: War For Cybertron PS3	80%	BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable PSP	84%
Green Day: Rock Band PS3	77%	Joe Danger PSN	96%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 PS3	60%	Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1 PSN	90%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4 PS3	79%	Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2 PSN	92%
Pure Football PS3	69%	Rocket Knight PSN	74%
Trinity Universe PS3	61%	Anarchy: Rush Hour PSN	73%
International Cricket 2010 PS3	61%	Hamsterball PSN	72%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands PSP	52%	Kick-Ass The Game PSN	60%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault PSP	79%	Puzzle Chronicles PSN	70%

game	issue	score
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	**173**	**62%**
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	**194**	**79%**
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	**187**	**71%**
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	**160**	**76%**
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	**172**	**94%**
Create, share and play. Sackboy heads up Media Molecule's highly customisable and adorable platformer.		
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	**163**	**69%**
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	**175**	**52%**
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	**157**	**82%**
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	**184**	**82%**
MAG	189	68%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	**151**	**64%**
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	**161**	**85%**
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	**167**	**92%**
Not the final *Metal Gear Solid* game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	**186**	**94%**
A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.		
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	**173**	**84%**
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	**173**	**71%**
ModNation Racers	**192**	**90%**
The best kart racer by far on the PlayStation 3, but combined with incredible levels of creativity. If you love *LBP* you'll love this, too.		
Monster Madness	**170**	**78%**
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	**172**	**65%**
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotorStorm	**151**	**92%**
With the addition of an online multiplayer, *MotorStorm* gets the score it deserves, and currently leads the lines for the next gen.		
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	**172**	**93%**
With its balls strapped firmly to the wall, *Pacific Rift* amplifies the drama of the original to create the PS3's best racing title.		
MX Vs ATV Reflex	**189**	**68%**
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	**174**	**59%**
NASCAR 08	157	38%
NBA 07	**153**	**33%**
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	**172**	**71%**
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA Live 08	**158**	**59%**
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	**151**	**68%**
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%

game	issue	score
Need For Speed ProStreet	**161**	**86%**
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	**173**	**75%**
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	**151**	**80%**
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	**186**	**70%**
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	**184**	**85%**
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	**184**	**82%**
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Overlord: Raising Hell	**167**	**65%**
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	**183**	**69%**
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	**172**	**80%**
PES 2010	185	72%
PixelJunk Racers	**160**	**74%**
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Prince Of Persia	**174**	**83%**
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	**191**	**40%**
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	**171**	**80%**
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	**175**	**57%**
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Rainbow Six Vegas	**155**	**88%**
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	**186**	**82%**
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Dead Redemption	**193**	**92%**
Relocates the familiar *GTA* formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		
Red Faction: Guerrilla	**180**	**80%**
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	**190**	**86%**
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	**173**	**90%**
With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, *Resistance 2* is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	**151**	**75%**
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	**169**	**94%**
Rock Band could be the best rhythm-action game ever. Especially if you're playing with a group of friends. Even better after a few beers.		
Rock Band 2	**179**	**96%**
With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Rogue Warrior	**188**	**09%**
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	**172**	**79%**
Saw	186	52%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	**177**	**85%**
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	**193**	**67%**
Sega Rally	**158**	**92%**
Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for *Colin McRae*. Not much in it, really.		
Sega Superstars Tennis	165	68%
Shaun White Snowboarding	**173**	**72%**

game	issue	score
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	**174**	**64%**
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	**159**	**80%**
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Skate	**159**	**86%**
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	**192**	**86%**
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic The Hedgehog	**151**	**52%**
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	**169**	**94%**
Even the gimmicky appearance of Darth Vader can't spoil *Soul Calibur IV*. Another wonderful addition to the franchise.		
Spider-Man 3	**155**	**33%**
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	**153**	**79%**
Split/Second: Velocity	**192**	**90%**
Just beating *Blur* to the chequered flag, *Split/Second* is a wonderfully intense racing game in the *Burnout* mould.		
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	**190**	**63%**
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Stormrise	**178**	**51%**
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	**176**	**95%**
The best beat-'em-up on the PS3, probably the best beat-'em-up ever, and maybe even the best game ever. Our poor little thumbs.		
Stuntman: Ignition	**157**	**82%**
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	**190**	**55%**
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	**191**	**90%**
The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made.		
Tekken 6	**184**	**94%**
There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, *nothing*, stops *Tekken 6* from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
The Beatles: Rock Band	**184**	**96%**
It's a gorgeous game that'll make Beatles fans feel like they're being swaddled in a veil of pure joy. A breathtaking product.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	**163**	**80%**
The Darkness	**154**	**91%**
This unique FPS combines the best bits of *Mafia* and war films along with some highly innovative gameplay elements.		
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	**152**	**91%**
This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, *Oblivion* is an awesome game.		
The Godfather	**151**	**37%**
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	**162**	**32%**
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	**182**	**82%**
The Orange Box	**161**	**93%**
Five brilliant games for the price of one, what on Earth could be better than that? Nothing, that's what. *Absolutely nothing*.		
The Saboteur	**187**	**67%**
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	**158**	**73%**
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%

**denotes import review*

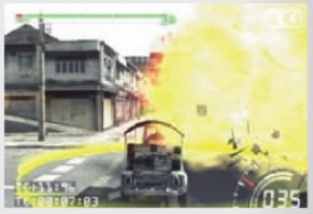
CULT HEROES

Stuntman

Infogrames/Atari • 2002 • PS2 • Play 93 • 85%

IF YOU THINK something like *Demon's Souls* is a hard game then you obviously haven't played the original *Stuntman*. Released in a time when games were easier than they'd ever been, it brought players back to earth with a resounding bump. Probably with a sneer, too, just to rub it in. Where *Demon's Souls* is hard, *Stuntman* was *hard*.

One of the best elements of the game was its simplicity – the name is self-explanatory, telling you who you are, what you do and, effectively, why you do it. And there was no mucking about with duality of meaning or other such nonsense – it was called *Stuntman*, and you were a stuntman who did stunts in a few different movies.



But with this simplicity came intense, incredible difficulty. You weren't just likely to fail more or less every sequence of stunts that you attempted: you *would* fail them. A chicane into a hairpin turn – fine. Then drive through a huge explosion without getting caught in it – okay. *Then* hit a ramp dead centre – hmm. *THEN* land on the back of a moving train – ah.

Stuntman was divisive, but we loved it. There were lots of restarts, and most of us never finished it. But the feeling of accomplishment when you got something right was on a par with the time our dads hugged us even though they'd never shown us love at any point in our lives...

GAMING CLICHÉS & VIDEOGAME LOGIC

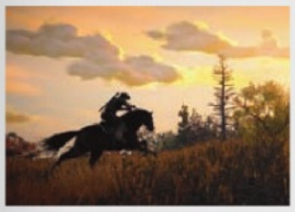
Replaying missions

IF A STANDARD videogame mission – 'save the girl or she will die', for example – were to be tackled in real life, what would failure bring? That's right: a dead girl. In the land of videogames this has generally brought something completely different: the ability to reverse time and try again. Isn't it about time this trend changed?

You fail a mission, a character dies. Missions get more urgency behind them. They're more cinematic, there's more risk and greater

reward. It involves more in the way of programming hours, but the game is left infinitely better off because of it. It's less jarring and less rooted in a dependence on old-fashioned game design choices.

Now we don't mean this for every game that comes out, as obviously it just wouldn't suit things like more arcadey titles or those lacking in any real attempt to be cinematic, or those that don't house any real depth. But there are certain types of game – you know who



you are – where this would suit an emergent style of play.

It's hard to believe that, even now in this golden age of high-quality gaming, there are only very few examples (hello, *Heavy Rain*) that operate with this 'no fail' approach. Even the likes of *Red Dead Redemption* and *MGS: Peace Walker* stick to the retry mechanic. The simple addition of the inability to fail, as such, would increase immersion no end.

game	issue	score
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	**181**	**69%**
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Time Crisis 4	**166**	**69%**
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	**171**	**71%**
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X	**177**	**75%**
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	**151**	**85%**
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	**188**	**52%**
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Tornado Outbreak	**186**	**56%**
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	**156**	**34%**
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity Universe	**194**	**61%**
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	**163**	**46%**
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	**180**	**90%**

Undisputed is gorgeous to look at, it's incredibly deep, and it's one of the most addictive fighters we've played in ages.

UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	**161**	**87%**
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	**185**	**96%**

Among Thieves has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.

Unreal Tournament III	**162**	**88%**
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	**173**	**82%**
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	**165**	**74%**
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	**180**	**80%**
Virtua Tennis 3	**150**	**91%**

Pick-up-and-play gameplay strikes another blow, proving that the PS3 is currently at its best when it keeps it simple.

Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhawk	**157**	**84%**
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	**190**	**16%**
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	**178**	**72%**
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	**190**	**55%**
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	**151**	**56%**
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	**178**	**80%**
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2009	**173**	**74%**
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2010	185	77%
X-Blades	**178**	**54%**
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza 3	**191**	**80%**
Yakuza 4*	193	75%

PS STORE LISTING

1942: Joint Strike	**170**	**74%**
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	**193**	**91%**

Classic, frantic and utterly brilliant arcade action from Sega. A fine example of what the company is best known for.

Age Of Booty	**172**	**81%**
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	**193**	**68%**
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Bishi Bashi Special!	**175**	**61%**
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Blast Factor	**152**	**72%**
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	**188**	**61%**
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bomberman Ultra	**185**	**82%**
Braid	**188**	**93%**

We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for *Braid*. Simply brilliant.

Burn Zombie Burn	**178**	**85%**
Call Of Duty Classic	**188**	**90%**

It doesn't have *MW2*'s polish but it's a great game both as a slice of history and in its own right.

Calling All Cars	155	81%
Comet Crash	**186**	**84%**
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	**176**	**55%**
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3: Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	**175**	**44%**
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	**175**	**31%**
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	**174**	**82%**
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	**170**	**79%**
Critter Crunch	**188**	**91%**

This is yet another beautiful, cute and high-class puzzler on the PSN that works perfectly and is a joy to play.

Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Dark Mist	**164**	**53%**
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	**186**	**50%**
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	**190**	**66%**
Driver	**171**	**90%**

With the most cinematic car chases ever seen in a game, *Driver* made a huge impact in 1998. Despite ropey graphics, it's still a playable title.

Droplitz	**184**	**91%**

Droplitz is a superb puzzler that blends *Rez*-style layers of music, pipes and dials to create one of the most satisfying puzzlers in years.

echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	**170**	**45%**
Everybody's Golf 2	62	83%
Fade To Black	**09**	**44%**
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	**168**	**65%**
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	**193**	**90%**

This scrolling-fighter classic from 1989 makes an almost faultless appearance on PSN. Stick it on your download list.

Final Fantasy VII	**181**	**96%**

Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.

Final Fantasy VIII	**190**	**90%**

A truly engaging RPG – if you've never experienced the game before then make sure this is the next thing you download.

Flock!	**179**	**70%**
flOw	**151**	**90%**

Another 90% game for the PS3, another lesson in simple, addictive gameplay. *flOw* is an innovative title available on the Network.

Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	**190**	**35%**
G-Police	27	84%
Geon	**175**	**71%**
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gran Turismo HD	**150**	**75%**
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	**191**	**75%**
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gunstar Heroes	**181**	**85%**
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	**15**	**81%**
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	**187**	**75%**
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	**178**	**64%**
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	**188**	**70%**
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	**171**	**80%**
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	**185**	**70%**
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	**194**	**96%**

Simply put, Joe Danger is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.

Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	**172**	**55%**
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Kula World	**172**	**71%**
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	**151**	**79%**
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	**159**	**80%**
Lumines Supernova	**178**	**90%**

Probably the best puzzle game on the PSN, which is saying something because there's loads of competition.

Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Magic Carpet	**179**	**65%**
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	**182**	**90%**

This game has an astonishing amount to offer if you're prepared to plunge into its murky depths.

Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
MediEvil	**173**	**45%**
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	**192**	**82%**
Metal Gear Solid	**187**	**93%**

While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.

Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Motorhead	**173**	**60%**
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Noby Noby Boy	**177**	**85%**
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	**183**	**60%**
N20	37	70%
OutRun Online Arcade	**180**	**80%**
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	**189**	**94%**

So addictive it should come with some sort of government warning. Terrific value for money and a superb little puzzle game.

PixelJunk Eden	**169**	**67%**
PixelJunk Monsters	**163**	**94%**

The second game in the *PixelJunk* series is great fun and brilliantly addictive. Buy it and play it constantly for hours on end!

PixelJunk Shooter	**187**	**93%**

Q-Games delivers excellence on the PSN once again with its *PixelJunk* series, this time in the form of a classic shoot-'em-up.

Piyotama	**162**	**62%**

game	issue	score
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	**46**	**70%**
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puzzle Chronicles	**194**	**70%**
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	**58**	**53%**
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	**29**	**77%**
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	**01**	**76%**
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	**162**	**86%**
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	**165**	**63%**
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	**194**	**90%**

Clever, funny and taxing in all the right ways, we're very happy that the Freelance Police are on PlayStation 3.

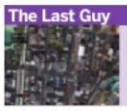
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	**194**	**92%**

This is even better than the first episode due to the fact it has better puzzles and even funnier dialogue.

Savage Moon	**175**	**87%**
Section 8	193	78%
Shatter	**183**	**91%**
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	**170**	**62%**
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	**178**	**55%**
Spin Jam	174	32%
Syphon Filter	**48**	**93%**

Gabe Logan's gritty PSone adventure has shadowed all that came after. As always, the original really is best.

Snakeball	176	92%
Star Trek: D-A-C	**189**	**57%**
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Skater 2	**178**	**40%**
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	**151**	**83%**
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	**155**	**74%**
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	**191**	**75%**
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tank Battles	**186**	**68%**
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	**161**	**87%**
The Last Guy	**171**	**91%**



Snake meets *Pac-Man* meets GoogleMaps, *The Last Guy* is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.

The Punisher: No Mercy	**182**	**49%**
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	**174**	**80%**
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	**54**	**34%**
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	**162**	**31%**
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	**159**	**50%**
Trine	184	85%
Uno	**189**	**85%**
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	**192**	**87%**
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	**171**	**80%**
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
WipEout	**01**	**89%**
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	**181**	**70%**
Worms	**179**	**91%**

There's a reason *Worms* is still going strong, and that's because people never get tired of its fun personality and addictive gameplay.

Zuma	182	78%

PSP minis LISTING

Alien Havoc	186	68%
Bloons	**186**	**65%**
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	**186**	**45%**
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	**186**	**57%**
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero of Sparta	**186**	**57%**
Kahoots	186	88%
Pinball Fantasies	**186**	**90%**
Puzzle Scape	**186**	**75%**
Tetris	**186**	**93%**

How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.

Vempire	186	67%

PSP LISTING

300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	**147**	**72%**
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	**152**	**82%**
Ape Academy	134	44%
Ape Academy 2	**145**	**52%**
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	**190**	**45%**
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	**142**	**68%**
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	**145**	**45%**
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	**184**	**53%**
Bomberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	**165**	**69%**
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	**149**	**69%**
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	**134**	**94%**

Despite being more of a 'best of' than a completely new game, *Legends* is the best racing game on the PSP.

Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	**147**	**80%**
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	**143**	**60%**
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	**137**	**65%**
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	**180**	**32%**
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	**153**	**69%**
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core – Final Fantasy VII	**167**	**87%**
Crush	154	80%
Dante's Inferno	**191**	**76%**
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	**161**	**92%**

An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game.

Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	**190**	**87%**
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	**154**	**68%**
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	**148**	**85%**
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	**147**	**74%**
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	**191**	**73%**
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Every Extend Extra	**145**	**84%**
Exit	138	65%
F1 2009	**187**	**66%**
F1 Grand Prix	134	81%
Field Commander	**145**	**83%**

Buyer's guide to... Scratch-free gaming

The d_skin

If you're one of those gamers who is constantly flitting through your collection of games and Blu-rays then you might well have added a fair few scratches to your precious discs, making some unplayable. Fear not, though, as help is at hand in the form of these new protective sleeves known as a d_skin. The d_skin is a laser transparent skin that bolts onto the bottom of your discs and never has to be removed – unless you managed to scratch that as well, but then you can just toss it out and snap on a new one. We've seen today that it was also voted the 'Coolest Time Magazine Invention' – although we're not entirely sure what's so cool about a disc protector they do actually work and that's good enough for us.

More information is available from: www.scratchfree.co.uk

SkipDr Classic

Are your discs suffering a bad case of the scratches? If so, it's time to call the doctor... the SkipDr. This device is designed to buff out surface scratches on your discs while also leaving them free of dirt and grime. The SkipDr system requires spraying, spinning and shining and leaves your disc shiny and new (looking). The SkipDr is designed to work with most types of disc and best of all you don't have to wait a week and a half to get an appointment with this doctor.

More information is available from: www.digitalinnovations.com

**denotes import review*

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO... Mascots

ONCE THE MAINSTAY of videogames, the public face of a developer or console and an excuse to give away more posters with magazines than we do now, the mascot has faded into abject obscurity. But what went wrong?

Mario, Sonic, even Crash Bandicoot were all considered mascots at some time in the last 20 years. Of these, only one is still console/company specific, that being the fat Italian plumber. The rest? Sellouts.

Sonic whores himself out to any console that will have him, and Crash Bandicoot displays all the behaviour of a desperate crack addict. Though, to be fair, we haven't seen him pop up in recent times. Has anyone checked if he's okay?

But why did mascots suffer such a humiliating fall from grace? Can we blame changing attitudes? The fact that young 'uns these days prefer a tin of cider and knife crime to wholesome anthropomorphic cartoon animals? We're not sure.

Mascots seem to have been deemed unnecessary in modern times. Some exist, but it's more the franchise than the character that prevails. We're unlikely to see a return to hedgehogs with attitude selling consoles.

REMAKES WE'D LIKE TO SEE

Colony Wars: Vengeance

PSone • 1998

AS WE MENTIONED in **Play** 191, we'd like to see *Colony Wars: Vengeance* on PSN. But we've had a change of heart: howsabout a full-on remake of the little space combat blighter?

THERES A DEARTH of recent games that capture the epic feel of so many games of the late-Nineties. Aside from... umm... well, there aren't any on PS3 that we can think of.

WITH THAT IN mind this would surely mean that whoever's job it would be to remake *Vengeance* would have the market to themselves. It would be a wonderfully shrewd move.

AN EPIC STORYLINE and great-looking cut-scenes are things we look for in today's games. They're also things *Vengeance* had, albeit through rose-tinted vision, 12 years ago.

VENGEANCE HASN'T AGED particularly well, but the culture of remakes should stretch to this decade-old gem and give us some space-shooty goodness on PlayStation 3.

game	issue	score
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	**147**	**81%**
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	**134**	**60%**
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy Tactics	**159**	**86%**
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	**147**	**62%**
Football Manager Handheld	139	82%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	**161**	**49%**
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	**143**	**78%**
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	**144**	**65%**
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	**188**	**55%**
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Go! Sudoku	**137**	**45%**
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
Gradius Collection	**144**	**80%**
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Gripshift	**136**	**81%**
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	**185**	**95%**

Bar some combat control issues, *GTA: Chinatown Wars* has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game.

GTA: Liberty City Stories	**135**	**95%**

Successfully taking the *GTA* formula and putting it on one UMD of pure goodness, this is one of the PSP's best games.

GTA: Vice City Stories	**147**	**96%**

Improving on its predecessor, the only way *Vice City Stories* could be topped is if *San Andreas* comes to the PSP.

Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	**136**	**69%**
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	**186**	**73%**
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	**181**	**60%**
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	**154**	**70%**
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	**187**	**71%**
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	**141**	**70%**
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	**137**	**60%**
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Lemmings	**138**	**63%**
LittleBigPlanet	**186**	**90%**

Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup.

LocoRoco	**143**	**94%**

We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without.

LocoRoco 2	**173**	**82%**
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lumines II	**137**	**74%**
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	**155**	**38%**
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	**147**	**72%**
Medievil Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	**145**	**66%**
Metal Slug Anthology	**150**	**91%**

We're not too clued up on retro games, but we do know our *Metal Slug* and the *Anthology* is a great compilation.

Metal Gear Acid 2	**138**	**92%**

More card-based espionage starring everyone's favourite mullet-head, with funky new cel-shaded graphics.

game	issue	score
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	**193**	**92%**

A fantastic entry in the *Metal Gear Solid* series and one of the best games on PSP. Wonderful.

Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	**150**	**91%**

A proper *Metal Gear Solid* game on a portable machine. It was never likely to disappoint, and it didn't. A great title.

Miami Vice	**144**	**82%**
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	**134**	**57%**
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	**140**	**81%**
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	**181**	**77%**
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	**184**	**72%**
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	**136**	**68%**
Naruto Shippuden Legends: Akatsuki Rising	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	**169**	**46%**
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	**175**	**57%**
Need For Speed Most Wanted	136	73%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	**139**	**93%**

The arcade classic comes to PSP and is just as good as it's ever been. The perfect game to play on a rainy Sunday afternoon.

PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	**163**	**86%**
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patchwork Heroes	**192**	**85%**
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	**185**	**86%**
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	**144**	**49%**
PoPoLoCRoIS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	**145**	**88%**
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	**138**	**69%**
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	**181**	**80%**
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	**173**	**54%**
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	**159**	**76%**
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	**153**	**66%**
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	**156**	**78%**
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Rengoku 2	**144**	**72%**
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	**145**	**78%**
Ridge Racer	**132**	**91%**

Arguably the best launch game on the PSP, *Ridge Racer* still stands up as one of the finest racing games for the system.

Rock Band Unplugged	**181**	**92%**

Unplugged comes highly recommended. It's superb – there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld.

Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	**169**	**79%**
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	**158**	**90%**

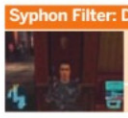
Very nearly as good as its PlayStation 3 counterpart. Which is a good thing because that's the best rally game money can buy.

Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	**160**	**87%**
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
Smash Court Tennis	**154**	**58%**
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%

game	issue	score
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	**190**	**71%**
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	**140**	**69%**
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	**162**	**35%**
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	**183**	**92%**

New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights are as hectic and solid as ever.

Spider-Man 3	**162**	**32%**
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	**139**	**71%**
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	**178**	**78%**
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	**137**	**74%**
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	**148**	**69%**
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	**138**	**70%**
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	**142**	**54%**
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	**140**	**90%**



In the absence of a 'real' *MGS* game, it's left to Gabe Logan to carry the stealthy torch, and he does a fine job.

Tekken 6	**187**	**90%**

Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play, *Tekken 6* is the best game of the series on PSP.

Tekken: Dark Resurrection	**143**	**92%**

Tekken: Dark Resurrection is instantly playable and provides the PSP's first great brawler.

Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	**146**	**51%**
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	**153**	**64%**
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
The Godfather Mob Wars	**136**	**66%**
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	**137**	**71%**
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	**152**	**70%**
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	**156**	**81%**
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	**134**	**54%**
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	**189**	**46%**
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	**158**	**49%**
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	**140**	**82%**
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	**161**	**70%**
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	**159**	**86%**
WipEout Pure	**138**	**91%**

Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld *WipEout* game could be, *Pure* is an essential PSP purchase.

World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	**141**	**67%**
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	**157**	**80%**
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2007	**147**	**80%**
World Rally Championship	134	67%

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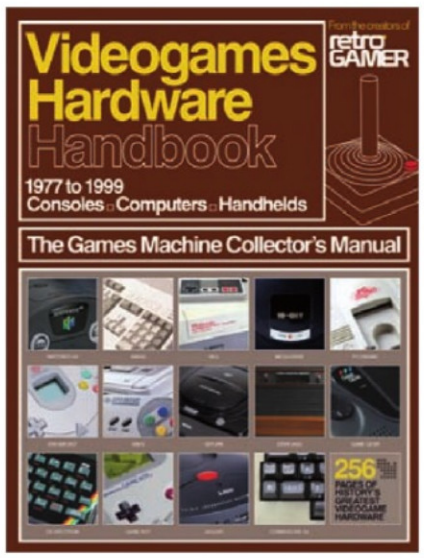

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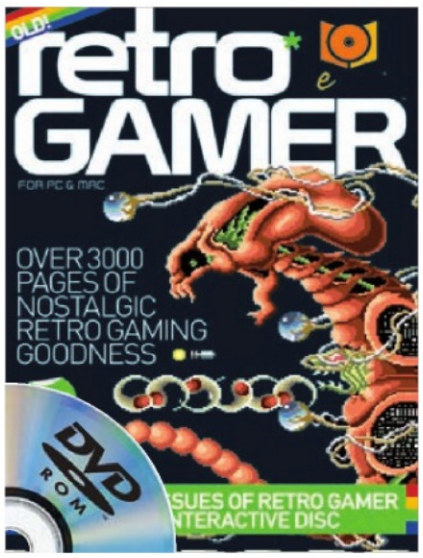

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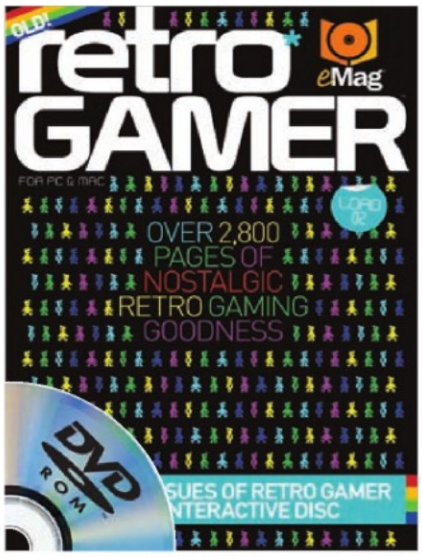

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ANSWERS

1. Ezio – *Assassin's Creed II*
2. Altair – *Assassin's Creed*
3. Jackie – *The Darkness*
4. Zevran – *Dragon Age: Origins*
5. Starkiller – *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*
6. Agent 47 – *Hitman*
7. Cyborg Ninja – *Metal Gear Solid*
8. Travis – *No More Heroes*
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